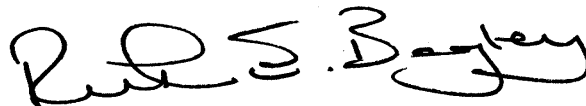


Date of issue: Wednesday, 28 August 2013

<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>NEIGHBOURHOODS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL</b> (Councillors Minhas (Chair), Dar, Dhillon, Malik, M S Mann, Plenty, Shah, Sohal and Wright)  <u>Non-Voting Co-Opted Members</u>  Naomi Owens (Leaseholder Forum Representative), Terry Conroy (Slough Federation of Tenants and Residents) and Vivianne Royal (Customer Senate)
<b>DATE AND TIME:</b>	THURSDAY, 5TH SEPTEMBER, 2013 AT 6.30 PM
<b>VENUE:</b>	MEETING ROOM 3, CHALVEY COMMUNITY CENTRE, THE GREEN, CHALVEY, SLOUGH, SL1 2SP
<b>SCRUTINY OFFICER: (for all enquiries)</b>	SARAH FORSYTH  01753 875657

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are requested to attend the above Meeting at the time and date indicated to deal with the business set out in the following agenda.



**RUTH BAGLEY**  
Chief Executive

AGENDA

PART I



<u>AGENDA ITEM</u>	<u>REPORT TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>	<u>WARD</u>
<u>AGENDA ITEM</u>	<u>REPORT TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>	<u>WARD</u>

Apologies for absence

## CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

1. **Declarations of Interest**  
All Members who believe they have a Disclosable Pecuniary or other Pecuniary or Non Pecuniary Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting must declare that Interest and, having regard to the circumstances described in Section 3 paragraphs 3.25 – 3.27 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter is discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with paragraph 3.28 of the Code.

Members are asked to confirm that they do not have a declarable interest.

All Members making a declaration will be required to complete a Declaration of Interests at Meetings form detailing the nature of their interest.

2. **Minutes of the last meeting held on 19 June 2013** 1 - 4

## SCRUTINY ISSUES

3. **Member Questions**  
(An opportunity for Panel Members to ask questions of the relevant Director / Assistant Director, relating to pertinent, topical issues affecting their Directorate – maximum of 10 minutes allocated.)
4. **Adoption of Housing Allocation Scheme 2013-2018** 5 - 56
5. **Tenant Led Co-Regulation in Slough - Slough Customer Senate (SCS)** 57 - 68
6. **The Role of Caretakers in Supporting Neighbourhoods** 69 - 82

**AGENDA**  
**ITEM**

**REPORT TITLE**

**PAGE**

**WARD**

**ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

- |    |   |         |  |
|----|---|---------|--|
| 7. | <b>Forward Work Programme</b>   | 83 - 86 |  |
| 8. | <b>Attendance Record 2013/14</b>  | 87 - 88 |  |
| 9. | <b>Date of Next Meeting(s)</b><br>6 November 2013<br>30 October (Extraordinary Meeting to be confirmed) |         |  |

Press and Public

You are welcome to attend this meeting which is open to the press and public, as an observer. You will however be asked to leave before the Committee considers any items in the Part II agenda. Special facilities may be made available for disabled or non-English speaking persons. Please contact the Democratic Services Officer shown above for further details.

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**Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Wednesday, 19th June, 2013.**

**Present:** Councillors Minhas (Chair), Dar, Malik, M S Mann, Plenty, Shah, Sohal and Wright (Vice-Chair)

**Non-Voting Co-optees:** Terry Conroy (Slough Federation of Tenants and Residents), Naomi Owens (Leaseholder Forum Representative) and Vivianne Royal (Customer Senate)

**PART 1**

**1. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**2. Election of Chair**

The nomination of Councillor Minhas was proposed and seconded. There being no other nominations it was:

**Resolved** – that Councillor Minhas be elected Chair of the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel for the 2013/14 municipal year.

(Councillor Minhas in the Chair)

**3. Election of Vice-Chair**

The nomination of Councillor Wright was proposed and seconded. There being no other nominations it was:

**Resolved** – that Councillor Wright be elected Vice Chair of the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel for the 2013/14 municipal year.

**4. Minutes of the last meeting held on 6 March 2013**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 6 March 2013 were approved as a correct record.

**Resolved** – that Councillor Malik be appointed as the Panel's representative on the Traffic Congestion Working Group.

**5. Member Questions**

There were no Members Questions submitted.

## 6. Beds in Sheds (Slough Sheds)

Ray Haslam, Housing Standards Manager, updated the Panel on the progress of the 'Slough Sheds' project.

In particular, the Panel noted:

- that the thermal imaging flyover had taken place in march 2013, and had produced an enormous amount of data that could now be added to other layers of GIS data to produce an in-depth profile for the Slough area;
- that the Project Group was now meeting, drawing together key partners involved in the delivery of the Project;
- that the new data would enable enforcement action to be effectively targeted at specific properties, and that enforcement would begin in late June, early July;
- that Planning Enforcement would be key to dealing with initial inspections, and reviewed Guidance on this was being produced;
- that in addition to the thermal imaging, Trading Standards would continue to use its enforcement powers for breaches in Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) law, and that this was a robust system of enforcement; and
- that it would be important to recognise that the majority of landlords in Slough are good and they must be championed.

The Panel discussed the use of the new data in recognising properties that had been extended without planning permission and the enforcement powers the council held to deal with these situations such as rebranding of council tax and also the option of reporting landlords to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) where it was believed income from rental properties was not being declared.

The Panel questioned the level of activity that had taken place since November 2012, as no enforcement had taken place. Ray Haslam assured the Panel that the time had been used to gather intelligence, undertake the thermal imaging and mapping exercises, and develop a comprehensive communications plan. Following this enforcement would be begin shortly, based on this comprehensive evidence base. In addition, the Panel questioned whether the £220,000 allocated for this project ensured that the necessary resources were available, and were assured that this would meet resource requirements for the current financial year and into the following.

### **Resolved –**

- 1) to note the progress made on the 'Slough Sheds' project; and
- 2) that Councillor Shah would sit on the Project Board to offer political support and manage the process for feedback of information to the Panel.

## 7. Public Consultation: Waste Strategy 2013-2028

Nicholas Hannon, Waste and Environment Manager, detailed the proposed consultation to gather residents' views on the future of waste and recycling collection services, garden waste and composting.

The Panel noted that:

the results of the consultation would inform the strategic direction of waste management in the borough for the next fifteen years; and that the initial three month consultation would collect views and attitudinal data which would be used to develop the new Waste Strategy which would then be the subject of a further statutory consultation.

Members raised concerns that the consultation would not be run as a top down process, which would only target those already community-minded individuals involved in such groups as Neighbourhood Action Groups. Nicholas Hannon, assured the Panel that a comprehensive consultation communications plan was being developed to reach as many residents as possible, with hard to reach groups being looked at individually to attempt to engage them. The aim was to match, and if possible better, the 750 respondents from the 2007 waste consultation.

### **Resolved –**

- 1) that the Cabinet Member be made aware of the Panel's concern around reaching all residents with the consultation, and their suggestion that targeted door-stepping should be considered in areas where recycling is low or responses to the consultation are low; and
- 2) that the Panel would receive the results and analysis of the initial consultation in January 2014, before the Waste Strategy was published for consultation in February 2014.

## 8. Forward Work Programme

The Panel discussed it's work programme for the municipal year.

**Resolved –** that the work programme be approved as published, subject to the following amendments:

- 1) that the panel accepted the Cabinet request to undertake evidence gathering on the issue of Heathrow Expansion, and that this would be done through an extraordinary meeting in October 2013;
- 2) that reports on Domestic Violence and Street Prostitution be requested for the February 2014 meeting of the Panel, which would be held as the Crime and Disorder Committee; and

**Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel - 19.06.13**

- 3) that Housing and Health be removed from the work programme, with a discuss on the quality of housing stock being included in the November 2013 agenda item on the Management of Houses of Multiple Occupation.

**9. Date of Next Meeting**

**Resolved** – that the date of the next meeting be confirmed as 19 June 2013.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.10 pm)



**SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Neighbourhood & Communities Services Scrutiny Panel **Date:** 5 September 2013

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Hamid Khan, Head of Place Shaping  
**(For all Enquiries)** (01753)474057

**WARD(S):** ALL

**PART I**

**FOR COMMENT & CONSIDERATION**

**ADOPTION OF HOUSING ALLOCATION SCHEME 2013- 2018**

1. **Purpose of Report**

This report requests comment and consideration from the Panel for the adoption of a Housing Allocation Scheme by which council houses will be allocated in the future. The policy development has been prompted by the new flexibilities and freedoms introduced in the Localism Act 2011.

2. **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Panel is requested to:

- a) comment on the contents of the policy in general and also with specific regard to the options outlined in section 7 of this report; and
- b) recommend the adoption of the Policy to the Cabinet.

3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Corporate Plan**

3.1 **Slough Joint Wellbeing Community Strategy Priorities**

The quality of and access to housing is a key priority for the council. Slough's Wellbeing Strategy names housing as one of five priorities with the vision that:

“By 2028 Slough will possess a strong, attractive and balanced housing market which recognises the importance of housing in supporting economic growth.”

Those who have contributed in Slough for five years or more, are in employment, education or training, and who participate actively in established and recognised community projects will be rewarded with additional priority to access social housing, while those who have a history of anti social behaviour or poor financial management will be required to demonstrate a track record of behavioural change before they will be allocated housing. Those who commit fraud will not be given access to social housing.

Housing is central to the health and wellbeing of the population; it gives the ability to access work and assists in providing a safe environment for educational achievement. The scheme includes safeguards for the most vulnerable in society, and contributes to other council priorities by supporting initiatives around fostering and adoption, families first, those leaving care and young people moving on, as well as the elderly and disabled. Allocation of housing will also contribute to strong, sustainable, mixed and cohesive communities and to economic regeneration.

### 3.2 **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy: Cross-Cutting themes**

The proposed Allocation Scheme rewards civic responsibility by recognising applicants' community contribution in terms of employment, education, training and positive contribution to community priorities through sustained voluntary work. Anti social behaviour and failure to be financially responsible will not be tolerated in council housing. The scheme will prevent those who demonstrate this behaviour becoming eligible, thus contributing to community safety.

Residents who are adequately housed, and who have an aspiration to improve their circumstances will take pride in their community and work to improve the image of the town, including through volunteering and involvement in established and recognised charitable and community projects.

### 3.3 **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)**

Housing is a contributory factor to the wellbeing of Slough residents, and the Allocation Scheme supports the priorities in the JSNA. It contributes to reducing inequalities in health through access to high quality housing, increasing skills and employment opportunities by rewarding those who take steps to improve their own circumstances and contribute positively to the town, and early intervention to reduce child poverty and improve child safety through supporting initiatives around fostering and adoption, those leaving care and young people moving on.

By linking applicants behaviour to an allocation of housing the council is taking steps to protect the quality of housing, while allocating to those in greatest need will ensure greater availability of housing.

### 3.4 **Corporate Plan 2013/14**

The Allocation Policy has been designed to meet local needs and contribute to the specific priorities which Slough residents have identified. The scheme utilises new ways of working and delivers local and national change by making best use of available flexibilities to support local circumstances. The Policy further strengthens the concepts of Neighbourhoods and Environment.

## 4. **Other Implications**

### (a) **Financial**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The consultation will be carried out from within existing resources.

The housing register currently stands at over 7,000 households which generates a substantial administration burden for the housing service. Realistically matching

identified need to available resources means that only those likely to receive an allocation of housing within a reasonable time period will be eligible to join the housing register, maintaining the register at pragmatic levels. Reducing this burden is key to achieving efficiencies already identified within the housing service. The proposed new organisational structure includes positions to support the effective administration of the housing register, including independently checking eligibility.

(b) Risk Management

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigating action</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
<p><u>Legal</u> Requirement to consult residents and registered providers.</p> <p>Statutory Policy which affects all residents of Slough.</p>	<p>Three month statutory consultation utilising variety of methods.</p> <p>Policy scrutinised by legal Counsel to ensure statutory compliance and case law compliance.</p>	<p>Give residents the opportunity to comment on proposals.</p>
<p><u>Human Rights</u> To ensure compatibility with Article 8.</p>	<p>Policy scrutinised by legal Counsel to ensure statutory compliance.</p>	
<p><u>Equalities Issues</u> Groups may be disproportionately disadvantaged by the scheme.</p>	<p>Conduct EIA; administer the scheme in a fair and transparent way. Utilise independent reviewing officer to check eligibility.</p>	<p>Applicants have confidence in fair and transparent scheme.</p>
<p><u>Communications</u> Residents not aware of changes, do not respond to consultation.</p>	<p>Communications Plan produced and broad ranging consultation conducted.</p>	<p>Residents will be aware of the changes and can respond to the consultation to inform the final version.</p>
<p><u>Community Safety</u> Those committing ASB, crime and disorder will not be eligible to join the register.</p>	<p>The Policy promotes and encourages positive behaviours. Other housing pathways will be made available.</p>	

<p><u>Financial</u> Administration costs of housing register increase as demand increases.</p> <p>Increase in temporary accommodation costs.</p>	<p>Implement new Allocation Scheme to reduce register.</p> <p>New scheme will create more supply of social housing.</p>	<p>Housing allocation can be targeted to those in most need, more realistic waiting times, contributes to other council priorities.</p>
<p><u>Timetable for delivery</u> Failure to agree Policy will leave Council open to Judicial Review.</p>		

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

The proposed scheme is currently being considered by a highly reputable housing lawyer to ensure compliance with the law.

Equalities Impact Assessment

The policy is subject to a full Equality Impact Assessment. The policy will also undergo rigorous testing on actual 'live' cases and different scenarios, with outcome measured against key equality characteristics. A full report will be produced prior to any Policy being adopted and at the end of the consultation and testing period.

5. Supporting Information

- 5.1 Under the Housing Act 1996 all local housing authorities are required to have a Housing Allocation Scheme which governs how social housing is allocated to those who are eligible. The scope of Allocation Schemes has been amended by the Localism Act 2011, giving greater local freedom for housing authorities in allocating available accommodation
- 5.2 The Allocations Policy looks to build on the flexibilities and freedoms allowed in the Localism Act 2011. The Council's new approach to allocating affordable housing will be fairer, simpler and more realistic. In its strategic role as the local housing authority for the borough, the Council intends to ensure that meeting housing need and aspiration correlates more closely with current and future availability of affordable housing. The Council also intends to ensure that future occupants of affordable housing make a greater contribution to the community and the economy
- 5.3 Housing is a scarce resource nationally and in Slough, and demand far outstrips supply. The scheme sets out how Slough Borough Council will allocate housing to those who are eligible, in greatest housing needs, who have a track record of being good tenants, and who contribute positively to their neighbourhoods.
- 5.4 The Housing Allocation Scheme sets out the criteria for allocating council and registered provider properties by Slough Borough Council. The scheme operates

within guidance issued by government, including the new flexibilities offered by the Localism Act. The scheme contributes to the council's priorities by providing good quality housing to those in greatest need, while balancing the rights and responsibilities of applicants, and rewarding those who contribute positively within their community and the borough of Slough. The scheme provides support to the most vulnerable residents in Slough, working in conjunction with initiatives that help people live healthy, fulfilling and independent lives.

- 5.5 Eligibility which mainly concerns immigration status is set nationally, and therefore there is no local freedom in the application of this. This section of the scheme remains unchanged.
- 5.6 Qualification sets out the reasonable preference criteria, which remains unchanged
- 5.7 The Localism Act introduces the ability to set ineligibility criteria. It is this section which links applicants' ability to access housing with the responsibilities that come with it. As this scheme is intended to support Slough residents, only those who can demonstrate that they have lived in the area for a minimum period of five years will be admitted to the register. Applicants who behave anti socially and are not financially responsible will be ineligible to join the housing register.
- 5.8 Additional preference will be given to individuals whose behaviour contributes positively to the community and Slough Borough Council's priorities. Additional preference will result in applicants being housed more quickly. Additional preference will be granted to applicants who make a community contribution through employment, training, education or involvement in established charitable and community projects through volunteering. Those with good tenancy records will gain additional preference as they have demonstrated their responsibilities by paying rent on time, treating their property, their neighbours and their area with respect. Those who receive support through council initiatives such as fostering and adoption, care leavers, young people moving on and those participating in the family first programme will also receive additional preference as they are demonstrating positive community contribution. Members and former members of the armed forces are also recognised through the Armed Forces Covenant and will be granted additional preference.
- 5.9 Applicants will be given a choice of three broad areas where they wish to be housed, giving them an opportunity to indicate a preference linked to employment, education and family networks. Those who do not express a specific preference and are willing to be housed anywhere within the modestly sized borough will be housed more quickly. Applicants will be housed in any type of property which is suitable for their needs, and will receive one reasonable offer of accommodation.
- 5.10 To ensure that the vulnerable and those in most need will get access to housing discretion is built into the scheme for exceptional cases.
- 5.11 Once the Policy is agreed there will be a re-registration process where all households on the present housing waiting list will be contacted and asked to update their applications. All the applications will then be reassessed using the new criteria set out in the Policy. Testing is already underway to ensure that the criteria are fairly applied and that there are no negative equality implications.

## 6. Consultation Headlines

- 6.1 Consultation on the Housing Allocation Scheme 2013-2018 consisted of a number of predominant strands including an online and paper based questionnaire; engagement with Slough Customer Senate and Area Panels, public drop in sessions; engagement with Registered Providers and internal management engagement.
- 6.2 Awareness of the methods of consultation listed in 6.1 was highlighted through the council's usual communication channels including press releases, Twitter messages, information on the website, articles in the Citizen magazine distributed to 46,500 households and Streets Ahead magazine which is distributed to all Slough Borough Council tenants and residents.
- 6.3 The questionnaire provided an opportunity for feedback on twenty specific aspects of the proposed Allocation Scheme including ineligibility; size, location and type of properties and additional preference. A comments section and equalities monitoring information was also provided. The questionnaire could be completed online via the council's website. In addition, paper copies with a summary of the policy and pre-paid envelopes were provided in each of the borough's seven libraries, and at the reception of each of the three main corporate buildings. Posters advertising the availability of the hard copy questionnaires were also displayed in these buildings.

### 6.4 **Interim Results of Consultation**

As of 23<sup>rd</sup> August, around 80% of the way through the consultation, the council had received 362 online responses.

Possible answers were agree, disagree, don't mind, unless otherwise stated.

Of those who answered each question on:

#### **Ineligibility**

**88%** were in favour of only allocating housing to those who have a local connection to Slough of five years or more.

**79%** agreed that Slough should begin to operate a managed list, rather than an open list

**90%** agree that those convicted of housing or welfare fraud should not be admitted to the list

**92%** agree that those who fail to pay rent, committee ASB, a criminal offence or fraud should not be admitted to the list

**90%** agree that those who damage their property should not be admitted to the list

**87%** agree that those who are violent or aggressive towards staff should not be admitted to the list

**77%** agree that those with an income of over £42,000 should be ineligible

**66%** agree that those with over £20,000 in equity or savings should be ineligible

**46%** agreed, and **43%** disagreed that only those overcrowded by more than 1 bedroom should be admitted to the list

**35%** agreed, and **61%** disagreed that applicants should received only 1 reasonable offer of accommodation

#### **Size, location and type of properties**

**78%** agreed that allocations would not distinguish between council and housing association properties

**83%** agreed that enough, or more than enough choice would be provided by splitting the borough into three areas, giving applicants a choice of one area, while giving applicants who do not specify an area greater preference

#### **Additional Preference (AP)**

**72%** agree that AP should be awarded to those who have been employed for 12 months

**58%** agree that AP should be awarded to those who take part in training/education

**52%** agree that AP should be awarded to those who have volunteered for 12 months

**84%** agree that AP should be awarded to those who have good tenancy records

**56%** agree that AP should be awarded to children leaving care

**53%** agree that AP should be awarded to those leaving young people's accommodation

**65%** agree that AP should be awarded to approved foster carers and adopters

**65%** agree that AP should be awarded to former armed forces personnel

#### **Those who filled in the survey**

**95%** lived in Slough

The lowest response rate was from Foxborough at **2%** of the total responses, the highest from Central at **13%**

**53%** lived in private rented sector housing (24% of Slough residents live in the private rented sector), **12%** lived in owner occupied, **10%** in council owned.

**84%** were currently on the waiting list

Of those **47%** were placed in Band B. **52%** of those on the register are in Band B, showing a representative split.

**46%** of respondents identified as white British; 45.7% of Slough's population is white British according to the 2011 Census.

**19%** of respondents identified as Asian/British Asian; 39.7% of Slough's population is Asian/British Asian according to the 2011 Census.

- 6.5 The online and paper based questionnaires included a section for questions and comments giving respondents the opportunity to raise specific points. A wide range of comments were received, the majority positive. Several comments supported greater emphasis on Slough residents, while several expressed a perception that people were 'jumping the queue', but that the new scheme would reduce this. A number of people asked about the status of those currently on the register, and how this will be affected by the adoption of the new scheme. A number of comments referenced the level of communication currently received from the council to applicants, asking for this to be increased. A small number of comments indicated opposition to the reduction to three areas across the borough, and one suitable offer, matching the overall response to these elements of the questionnaire. A small number of comments suggested that more could be done to develop a housing stock to better match need.

- 6.6 Engagement with Slough Customer Senate included through Senate panel meetings and Area Panel Meetings as well as with Residents Groups. Slough Customer Senate felt that on the whole the Policy is welcomed. The Senate did raise concerns about choice for customers and changes that would be only one offer of suitable accommodation. The Senate also felt that transparency in the process was paramount and that there were sufficient safeguards for vulnerable households.
- 6.7 Engagement with established organisations in the borough including focus groups, including a broad range of statutory and voluntary stakeholders. Some statutory groups have responded with regard to concerns of those who live chaotic lifestyles due to substance misuse and who may fail the eligibility criteria.
- 6.8 The council held three public drop in sessions, one each in Britwell, central Slough and Langley. Across these sessions there were a number of attendees. Council officers were available to answer questions on the scheme and paper questionnaires were made available.
- 6.9 Dedicated Workshop for Elected Members has been organised for 3 September 2013.
- 6.10 Across the range of methods used to consult with people, feedback has been overwhelmingly supportive of the measures and criteria set out within the draft Scheme. The one element of the scheme which was actively opposed was only offering successful applicants one reasonable offer, which if refused would render the applicant ineligible to apply again. In the revised version of the Scheme the criteria has been changed to state that the applicant will be suspended for 12 months and then will be able to make a fresh new application which will not be retrospective in terms of date.

## **7 Changes recommended in response to the consultation**

- 7.1 Based on the consultation responses, members may wish to recommend the following amendments:
- a) Only one of the proposals put forward in the draft scheme was opposed by a majority of respondents, that of making one reasonable offer, which if rejected would result in an applicant being removed from the housing list and prevented from applying again.
- b) If they wish, members may be minded to modify this criteria in response to public opinion, and may do this by either:
- i) increasing the number of suitable offers which may be rejected by an applicant before they are removed from the list;
  - ii) including a period of suspension from the list, following a rejection of a suitable property, which could be put in place, for example, for twelve months; or
  - iii) a combination of both.



c) The only other proposal which did not receive over 50% support was that only households overcrowded by more than one bedroom, where this is their only housing need, will be admitted to the register. A majority of respondents were either in favour or didn't mind, so clearly there is not as demonstrable a level of demand for this to change.

d) Feedback from Housing and Environment staff and other statutory agencies have requested the Banding be reduced from four bands to three to simplify the assessment process. This will not have any affect on the priority awarded to households under the Policy and therefore is a reasonable change if agreed.

e) Officers may be required to make minor administrative changes for operational reasons or arising from changes agreed above.

## 8 **Conclusion**

8.1 The Housing Allocation Scheme gives the council the opportunity to support a number of priorities in the allocation of housing. Demand in the borough far outstrips supply, and therefore for the efficient operation of the process the scheme must be realistic about which applicants are likely to be successful. This gives certainty and flexibility to applicants, and provides for a more efficient process.

8.2 The council has carried out a wide reaching consultation utilising a variety of methods. The responses received are broadly representative of Slough's population and clients of the housing service, e.g. the proportion of respondents in each housing band.

8.3 Responses received have overwhelmingly supported the vast majority of measures set out in the draft Housing Allocation Scheme 2013-2018.

## 9 **Appendices Attached**

A - Draft Allocations Policy

B - Free Text Comments on Proposed Scheme

## 10 **Background Papers**

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# Housing Allocation Scheme 2013-2018



<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Foreword	
Introduction	
Objectives	
Housing context in Slough	
Welfare reforms	
The housing register	
Size, location and tenure	
Eligibility	
Qualification	
Reasonable preference	
Ineligibility	
Discretion	
Additional preference	
Banding	
Sheltered and extra care housing	
Tenancy matters	
Local lettings plan	
Allocation of properties	
Operation of the scheme	
Fraud prevention	
Appendix A: Allocation appropriate housing	
Appendix B: Community contribution criteria	



## Foreword

Good quality housing is fundamental to supporting people in living enriching and fulfilling lives. It has a profound effect on people's health and wellbeing, their ability to live independently, or with support, children's ability to learn and flourish, and a family's ability to live in safe, secure and stable surroundings.

The current housing landscape means that people are waiting longer to own their own homes, if indeed at all. At the same time rents in the private sector are increasing, making them increasingly unaffordable even for those in work. In this environment housing which is managed by the council, and its partners, Registered Providers, remains the most significant provider of properties available to those on lower incomes.

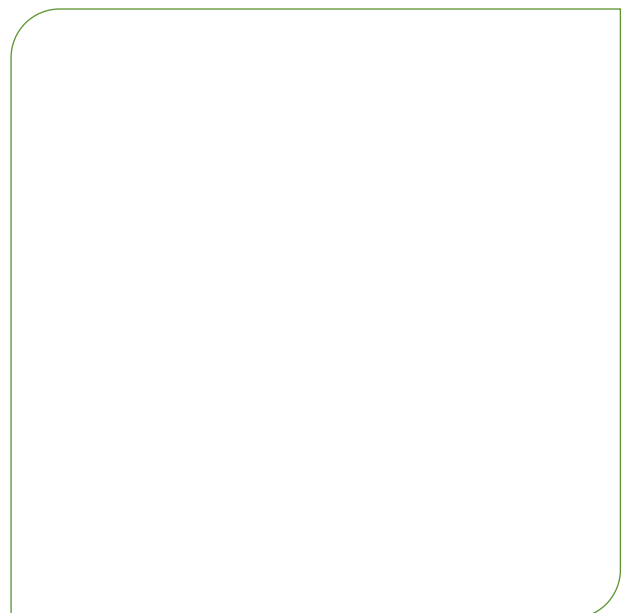
Housing managed by the council is funded by tenants and it therefore only fair that local residents who have lived and contributed to Slough get first call, and that is why this scheme now includes a criteria that applicants must have lived in Slough for five years before they qualify to receive housing.

I want to make sure that people who are in low paid work have the same ability to access good quality housing as those who earn more, because I want everybody to live decently and contribute to our community. The scheme also recognises those who make a positive contribution to our town, whether that be through active involvement in community projects, providing a stable Forever Family for fostered and adopted children, or by serving our country in the Armed Forces.

As social housing is such a scarce commodity, it should be preserved for those who have the highest need, who will treat this commodity with respect, and who will contribute to sustainable communities. This is why this policy goes further in linking rights and responsibilities. Households who pay their rent on time, who look after their properties, who contribute positively to their community and who are good tenants will be recognised with an allocation of housing. Those who are not, will not be, until they can demonstrate that they are good tenants.

I don't want social housing to be simply the option of last resort. I want to ensure all our neighbourhoods are well maintained places, with a sense of community and shared purpose where our residents thrive. This scheme, in addition to the suite of refreshed policies across the housing service make the best use of the scarce resource of social housing, allocating it to those who have the highest need, play by the rules and demonstrate that the council's offer of housing results in a positive change in their lives.

**Councillor James Swindlehurst  
Cabinet Member for  
Neighbourhoods and Renewal**



## 1. Introduction

Under the Housing Act 1996 all local housing authorities are required to have a Housing Allocation Scheme which governs how social housing is allocated to those who are eligible. The scope of Allocation Schemes has been amended by the Localism Act 2011, giving greater local freedom for housing authorities in allocating available accommodation.

Housing is a scarce resource nationally and in Slough, and demand far outstrips supply. This scheme therefore sets out how Slough Borough Council will allocate housing within the borough to those who are eligible.

The quality of and access to housing is a key priority for the council.

Slough's Wellbeing Strategy names housing as one of five priorities with the vision that:

"By 2028 Slough will possess a strong, attractive and balanced housing market which recognises the importance of housing in supporting economic growth."

Local people tell us that they want to see the availability of social housing increase, especially larger family homes. However without being able to deliver large quantities of new housing stock the council has to make best use of what already exists. At the same time the council also wishes to promote other tenures of accommodation, offering sustainable housing options which meet the needs of Slough residents and prevent the risk of homelessness.

There are also two crosscutting themes in the Wellbeing Strategy; civic responsibility and the image of the town. These are represented in this scheme through the behaviour of council tenants, and the link between rights and responsibilities.

The Corporate Plan 2012/13 complements the priorities set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy, and demonstrates the council's commitment to improving the quality and availability of housing for Slough residents, while striving to improve the level of service customers can expect from the council.

Slough's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) further highlights the demand for social housing in Slough and the requirement to prevent the risk of homelessness, especially where the provision of temporary accommodation for households homeless or at the risk of homelessness negatively affects family stability and the education of children.

The Housing Allocation Scheme operates alongside a number of other policy documents related specifically to the provision and management of housing, and the prevention of homelessness in the borough. These are:

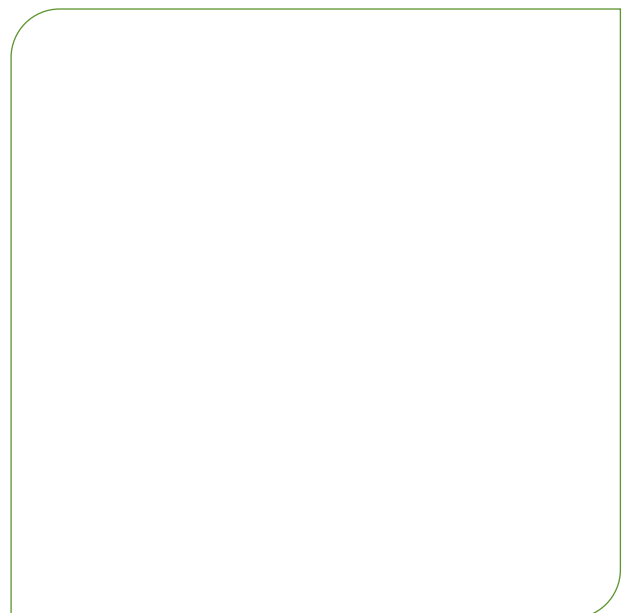
- Housing Strategy, which sets out overall objectives for the department
- Tenancy Strategy, which sets out the range of tenancies offered by the council, and the circumstances under which these will be offered
- Homelessness Strategy, which seeks to prevent the risk of homelessness in the borough



## 2. Objectives

The objectives of Slough's Housing Allocation Scheme are to:

1. Provide housing to those in greatest need, preventing the risk of homelessness
2. Reward responsible behaviour
3. Encourage mixed, strong and sustainable communities
4. Promote choice and control for tenants
5. Make the most effective use of the limited social housing stock in the borough
6. Make social housing a tenure of choice for households who;
  - 6.1. make a community contribution
  - 6.2. take greater personal responsibility for their actions and behaviour
  - 6.3. can demonstrate their ability to manage their affairs, including a tenancy



### 3. Housing context in Slough

#### 3.1 Local authority housing

Slough Borough Council has a stock of around 6,500 council properties, with a further 1,000 leasehold properties sold through the Right to Buy process. There are just under 4,000 properties owned or managed by Registered Providers, which the council can nominate to. The council cannot allocate to leasehold properties, and therefore the operational number of properties which can be allocated to applicants on the register is around 10,000.

The council allocates to this stock of properties from the Housing Register, governed by the criteria set out in this Housing Allocation Scheme.

As of 3rd September 2012, there were 7,313 households on the housing register. The economic situation is resulting in an increasing number of applications to the Housing Register. The council has limited ability to deliver new council properties due to the small number of available building plots in the borough, though does seek to provide housing where possible. The council has worked to deliver additional homes on former garage sites through partnerships with Private Registered Providers (formerly known as RSL's). This has successfully delivered over one hundred homes but has had limited impact within the context of the growing demand. The council has therefore taken steps to ensure that the scarce resource of social housing is allocated to those with greatest need.

The Tenancy Strategy adopted by the council in April 2013, for example, includes measures to match applicants with the most suitable properties, and reassessing this periodically to ensure the property continues to meet their needs. Housing management and benefits team figures indicate that around 750 social properties (including council and Registered Provider properties) are under-occupied by the housing benefit criteria.

This represents roughly 7% of the entire affordable stock. Making better use of existing stock can therefore help to alleviate pressure created by growing demand.

#### 3.2 Changes to admission to the housing register

The Localism Act 2011 has given local housing authorities the option to determine who does, and does not qualify for an allocation of housing. This will enable the provision of housing to those in most need. By only including those on the waiting list who are eligible, applicants will have more realistic expectations of the likelihood of them securing social accommodation within a reasonable timeframe.

The changes also enable local housing authorities more freedom to support those applying for a housing transfer, by giving greater flexibility. This will support the council's objectives of making the best use of the scarce resource of social housing.

#### 3.3 Lettings plan

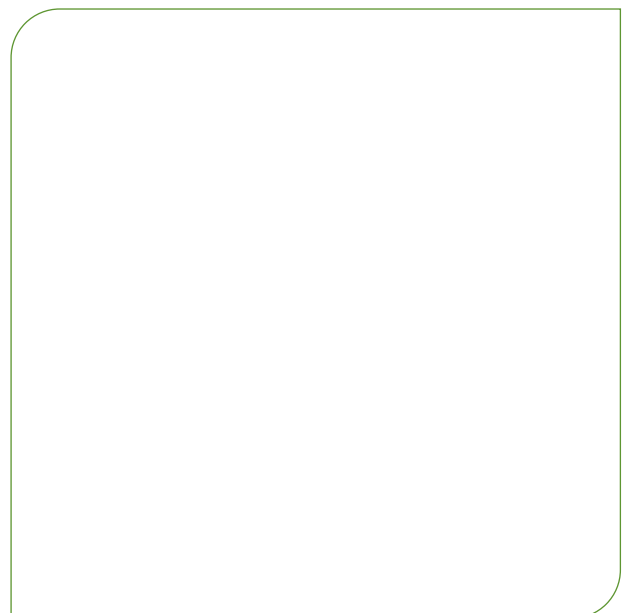
The council currently allocates to around four hundred properties each year across council and Registered Provider stock. Currently, the larger the property, the longer the wait. Each year the council creates a Lettings Plan which sets out an estimation of the number of properties of each size to be allocated to each band.

#### 3.4 Private housing market

The average residential property price in Slough is £204,381. This is lower than both the South East average of £260,030 and also lower than the national average of £226,887 (see detailed table below). Despite this, a Slough family, wishing to buy a terraced or semi-detached home would have to find around £43,000 for the deposit and have a household income of over £49,000 per annum assuming they can get an 80% mortgage from a lender prepared to lend at 3½ times their annual income.

<b>Slough residential property sales figures based on period January - March 2012 (land registry)</b>				
<b>Type</b>	<b>Detached</b>	<b>Flat</b>	<b>Semi</b>	<b>Terraced</b>
<b>Price</b>	£334,111	£137,227	£244,080	£198,563
<b>No sold in period</b>	25	75	61	108
<b>Change in last year</b>	-1.3%	2.3%	3.2%	1.1%
<b>Change in last quarter</b>	-7.6%	3.4%	0.3%	0.4%

Over the past four years, nationally home ownership has peaked and the percentage of owner occupiers has started to fall. Nationally, new social housing development has all but stopped since 2008 and in 2011 was still at the lowest level for 60 years. Slough has lower rates of owner occupation than regional or national averages, reflecting its relative deprivation. Slough does have a significantly larger privately rented sector than national or regional averages. Nationally this sector is growing, with both professional and amateur landlords looking to expand their role. The private rented sector is soon expected to become larger than the social rented sector.



## 4. Welfare reforms

At the same time as changes to tenancy types brought about by the Localism Act, there are a number of changes to the welfare system which have the potential to affect tenants and householders in Slough. These include both reductions in the total amount of benefit paid and changes to eligibility based on personal circumstances, as well as changes to housing benefit specifically for those in the social sector.

A cap on total benefits paid will be introduced from 1st April 2013 covering combined income from the main out of work benefits, housing benefit, child benefit and child tax credit. The cap will be £500 per week for couples and lone parents, and £350 per week for single adults. Households in receipt of certain benefits will be exempted from the cap.

Social sector under occupancy rules will be introduced which will reduce housing benefit paid to a household by 14% of eligible rent if under occupancy is by one bedroom and 25% reduction for under occupancy of two bedrooms or more. A new set of criteria have been established to identify which members of a household are entitled to a bedroom.

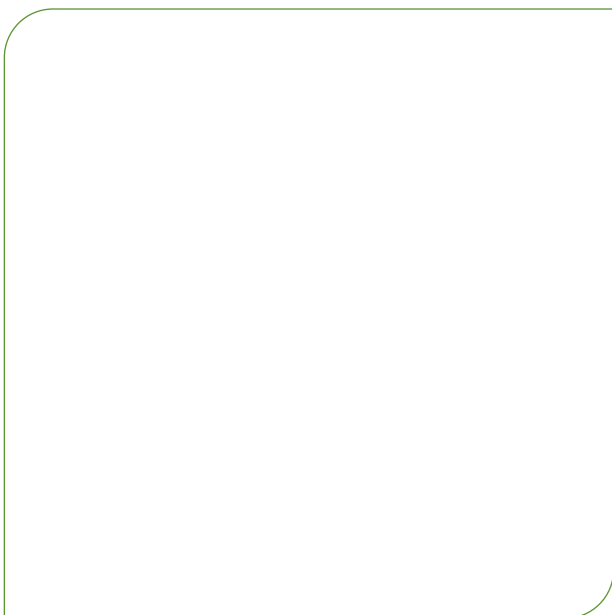
In January 2013 households where one member earns £50,000 or more per year lost automatic entitlement to child benefit.

There will also be changes to council tax benefit, which will now be called council tax support. From April 2013 local authorities will have to set their own criteria for council tax support, and the total budget allowed under the previous system will be reduced by 10%, requiring local authorities to make savings through changes to eligibility.

Local Housing Allowance rates are also changing; being frozen for a year from April 2012 and in future will be re-calculated on an annual, rather than monthly basis. In addition the definition of a young individual has been changed to mean anyone under 35, and said single young individuals will only be eligible for the shared rate of LHA regardless of the accommodation they occupy.

Changes linked to the Universal Credit mean that a range of benefit payments will be combined into one single monthly payment (rather than weekly) and will be paid to the claimant. This will pose a significant risk to landlords who previously received housing benefit directly, and will now need to collect rent. A move to monthly payments in arrears will also represent a significant departure from what many tenants are used to.

In light of these changes the council has a duty to ensure that tenancies granted are financially sustainable for the tenant in the long term, and that the council does not place tenants in properties which would cause them to be out of pocket due to the welfare reforms.



## 5. Housing options

Regardless of whether an individual or household qualifies to join the Housing Register, the council will provide housing options advice and support.

## 6. The housing register

This section includes information on the operation of the Housing Register.

- 6.1 Slough Borough Council will operate a managed Housing Register and will accept those:
  - 6.1.1 who meet **eligibility** criteria *and*
  - 6.1.2 who **qualify** by meeting the **reasonable preference** criteria, *and*
  - 6.1.3 do not fall into an **ineligible category**.
- 6.2 Applicants who meet these criteria and are accepted onto the Housing Register will be placed into one of three bands. The band they will be placed in will be determined by their circumstances. **Additional priority** will be awarded to applicants who meet the criteria set out within this scheme.
- 6.3 Within bands, housing will be allocated based upon the length of time an applicant has been on the register. The **Lettings Plan** sets out the allocation of properties each year across the bands.

## 7. Size, location and tenure of property

- 7.1 When making an application to join the Housing Register, applicants will be making an application to be housed:
  - 7.1.1 Somewhere within the borough of Slough. Applicants are able to express **one** preference area to be housed in.
  - 7.1.2 Households who **do not express a preference area will be afforded a greater priority for housing**.
  - 7.1.3 In any tenure or tenancy type which meets their needs, whether council managed accommodation or Registered Provider.
  - 7.1.4 In any size and type of property which meets the needs of the household, as determined by the size of the qualifying family, and any medical or other circumstances as appropriate.
- 7.2 When placing households onto the Housing Register, members of the household who do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be considered for the purposes of allocating a property. Due to the high demand for large properties, the council may not include certain members of the household such as non-dependent adult children, other adult relatives, non-relatives or lodgers, and in the case of large households the council may discuss how best to accommodate them.

## 8. Eligibility

- 8.1 Eligibility to join the Housing Register is as set out in the Housing Act 1996 Part VI 160ZA (as amended). Applicants covered by the below criteria will not be registered.
- 8.2 (160ZA, Allocation only to eligible and qualifying persons: England)
- (1) A local housing authority in England shall not allocate housing accommodation:
    - a. to a person from abroad who is ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation by virtue of subsection (2) or (4), or
    - b. to two or more persons jointly if any of them is a person mentioned in paragraph (a).
  - (2) A person subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 is ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation by a local housing authority in England unless he is of a class prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State.
  - (3) No person who is excluded from entitlement to housing benefit by section 115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (exclusion from benefits) shall be included in any class prescribed under subsection (2).
- 8.3 Persons who meet the above criteria will not be considered as part of an application made by a qualifying applicant.

## 9. Qualification: reasonable preference

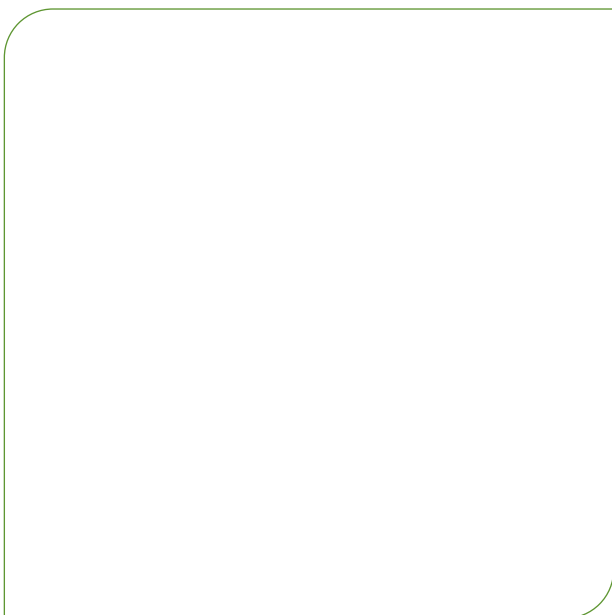
- 9.1 Applicants must meet at least one of the Reasonable Preference criteria to be registered.
- 9.2 Reasonable preference will be given to those in **high housing need**, including: (Housing Act 1996, 166A (3))
- (a) people who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 7);
  - (b) people who are owed a duty by any local housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any such authority under section 192(3);
  - (c) people occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
  - (d) people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including any grounds relating to a disability); and
  - (e) people who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others).

## 10. Qualification: ineligibility to join the housing register

- 10.1 Applicants who meet any one of the following criteria will not be registered.
- 10.2 Those who have been convicted of housing or welfare benefits related fraud where that conviction is unspent under the Rehabilitation Offenders Act 1974. Any person caught by this may re-apply once this conviction is spent
- 10.3 People who have a joint gross household income exceeding £42,000 (for 1 or 2 bed accommodation) (See Annexe \*\* for other thresholds)
- 10.4 Households that have over £20,000 in savings, investments or equity
- 10.5 Households only overcrowded by 1 bedroom, and this is their only housing need
- 10.6 Applicants who have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour which makes them unsuitable to be a tenant. This includes but is not limited to:
- 10.6.1 persistent failure to pay rent and/or service charges;
- 10.6.2 anti social behaviour perpetrated by the applicant or a member of his or her household which has caused a nuisance;
- 10.6.3 illegal or immoral behaviour;
- 10.6.4 threats of and/or actual violence;
- 10.6.5 racial harassment;
- 10.6.6 obtaining a tenancy by deception and/or an attempt at tenancy fraud.
- 10.7 Households who have been made one suitable offer by Slough Borough Council of a secure or assured tenancy anywhere within the borough of Slough, which has been refused by the household.
- 10.8 Households that have any housing related debt, including rent arrears, mortgage arrears in their current property or previous accommodation. This may be waived if agreement has been reached to clear the debt through a payment plan and this has been adhered to for a reasonable period.
- 10.9 Transfer tenants (from social housing) who have failed to maintain their homes, have caused damage to their home or have breached the terms of their tenancy. In the case of private accommodation, references may be sought from previous landlords to assess a tenant's record.
- 10.10 Households who have lived in Slough for less than five years (this does not apply to Armed Forces applicants. For households placed out of borough by SBC, time spent out of borough will contribute to residency).
- 10.11 Households who reside in Slough, but have been placed in
- 10.11.1 statutory temporary accommodation,
- 10.11.2 residential accommodation (including Assured Short Term, Secure or Assured tenancies),
- 10.11.3 other temporary accommodation, institutional accommodation by any other local authority, housing provider, health service or specialist provider.
- 10.11.4 who have refused an offer of an Assured Short hold Tenancy through the Council's Social Lettings Agency or Rent Deposit Scheme
- 10.12 Any applicant who has committed acts of violence and/or aggression against employees, including continual vexatious complaints will not be tolerated by the council. Any person using threats (verbal or other) or actual violence towards council staff will be removed from the register or will not be allowed to join the register. Households who have previously purchased their home through Right to Buy will also not be allowed to join the Register

## 11. Discretion

- 11.1 The Head of Place Shaping or Assistant Director Housing and Environment may exercise discretion on Additional Priority grounds in exceptional circumstances. The decision of the Assistant Director of Housing and Environment will be final.
- 11.2 The councils Housing Needs Panel will then consider exceptional cases. Examples of exceptional cases include, but are not limited to:
  - 11.2.1 Threat to life in the area in which they are residing
  - 11.2.2 Emergency cases whose homes are damaged by fire, flood or other disaster may be provided with other accommodation if it is not possible to repair the existing home, or if any work to repair is to take such a long period of time that there will be serious disruption to family life.
  - 11.2.3 Households who, on police advice, must be moved immediately due to serious threats to one or more members of the household, or who's continuing occupation would pose a threat to the community.
  - 11.2.4 Cases nominated under the Police Witness Protection Scheme or other similar schemes that the council has agreed to be part of.
  - 11.2.5 An applicant who has an exceptional need that is not covered in the Allocations Scheme. For example, where child or public protection issues require re-housing or for severe domestic abuse where all other options to remain in the home have been considered.
- 11.3 If a discretionary offer is made it will be as set out in the conditions of the Tenancy Strategy





## 12. Additional preference

- 12.1 Additional Preference will be given to applicants who meet one of the following criteria.
- 12.2 Households making a community contribution, showing accountability and responsibility
- 12.3 Secure or assured tenants who have:
- 12.3.1 Lived at the tenancy for at least three years
  - 12.3.2 No housing related debt
  - 12.3.3 A good tenancy record
- 12.4 Those leaving care (children)
- 12.5 Those requiring move on accommodation from Young People's Accommodation
- 12.6 Households who have been approved by Slough Borough Council to foster or adopt and have an existing track record of adopting for not less than 2 years
- 12.7 Armed forces who fall within the criteria of the Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012, and in line with SBC Armed Forces Covenant. This is applicable to a person who:
- 12.7.1 is serving in the regular forces or who has served in the regular forces within five years of the date of their application for an allocation of housing under Part 6 of the 1996 Act;
  - 12.7.2 has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person's spouse or civil partner where:
    - 12.7.2.1 the spouse or civil partner has served in the regular forces; and
    - 12.7.2.2 their death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service; or
  - 12.7.3 is serving or has served in the reserve forces and who is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to that service.
  - 12.7.4 The Head of Place Shaping and Assistant Director Housing and Environment can exercise discretion in giving Additional Preference to Armed Forces applicants, in the spirit of SBC's Armed Forces Covenant.
- 12.8 Those subject to a Local Lettings Plan
- 12.9 Households who wish to join the register to access to homebuy or housing products of a similar nature
- 12.10 Households who have actively and positively engaged with the Council's Family First programme and have shown real progression within the programme.

### 13. Banding

Band A	Urgent requirement to move due to Reasonable Preference AND Additional Preference
Band B	Requirement to move due to Reasonable Preference AND Community Contribution, with no area preference
Band C	Requirement to move due to Reasonable Preference AND Community Contribution, with area preference
Band D	Some requirement to move and Reasonable Preference, but no Community Contribution or reduced priority (See Appendix A)

The council will only register those households that are eligible and have a reasonable preference. However in some circumstances, even if Reasonable Preference criteria are met, the council may not accept a Housing Register application.

### 14. Sheltered and extra care housing

- 14.1 Sheltered accommodation is designed to provide a supportive environment to vulnerable older people.
- 14.2 To be eligible for sheltered accommodation applicants must fulfil the following criteria:
  - 14.2.1 Fulfil the eligibility and qualification criteria of this policy
  - 14.2.2 Be a minimum age of 55 years old
  - 14.2.3 Have a defined housing need
  - 14.2.4 Have a defined care need

### 15. Extra care accommodation

To qualify applicants must meet the eligibility and qualification criteria of this policy. In addition they need to have been assessed by Slough Borough Council’s Adult Social Care team and as a result of this have in place a care package to meet their assessed needs.

### 16. Tenancy matters

- 16.1 All transfers including beneficial transfers, flexible tenancies, Money to Move tenants incentive schemes, overcrowding issues, successions and assignments are outlined in the council’s Tenancy Strategy.
- 16.2 Households who are existing Council tenants can use mutual exchange to maximise their chances of moving to another home. The council uses Home Swapper to facilitate mutual exchanges, but retains the final authorisation to enable tenants to move. Tenants will be expected to use the scheme and any other initiatives set out to assist mobility and exchange.
- 16.3 Except for those subject to a Local Lettings Policy, applicants who wish to join the register to progress any of the above will be subject to the eligibility and reasonable and additional priority criteria set out in this scheme.

## 17. Local lettings plans

- 17.1 New affordable and social housing developments, (both RSL and Council or through an agreed partnering arrangement) and some existing estates or communities, may be subject to a local lettings policy. A local lettings policy will set criteria for nominations or allocations (including transfers, beneficial transfers and moves due to best use of stock) to homes in the relevant area, aimed at achieving or maintaining balanced and sustainable communities, or to address or prevent management problems and/or antisocial behaviour.
- 17.2 For new affordable and social housing developments, local lettings policies will dictate that allocations will be made predominantly to existing tenants seeking transfers who have demonstrated the ability to maintain a satisfactory tenancy in both financial and conduct terms.
- 17.3 Priority will also be given in a local lettings policy to households opting to downsize through the Money to Move tenants Incentive scheme.
- 17.4 Section 166A(6) of the Housing Act 1996 enables local housing authorities to allocate a particular accommodation to people of particular description whether or not they fall into the reasonable preference category. This section enables the council to set aside homes on a particular estate, or certain types of properties across the housing stock, for applicants who meet specific criteria as set out in a Local Lettings Plan.

## 18. Allocating properties

- 18.1 Properties will be allocated to the applicant who has waited longest in the relevant band, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- 18.2 Occasionally when a property becomes available which is particularly suitable for an individual applicant who has specific needs, it may be allocated to them even if they are not at the top of the Housing Register. This is to support the objective of effectively matching available housing stock to suitable applicants and making best use of the council's housing stock, especially adapted properties. In these circumstances the Head of Place Shaping or the Assistant Director, Housing and Environmental Services will need to agree that the applicant may be allocated the property ahead of applicants who have waited longer.
- 18.3 The council will produce an Annual Lettings Plan to show the allocations of properties by bedroom size and area.

## 19. Suitability of housing offers

Those accepted onto the Housing Register will be given one offer of suitable accommodation when they reach the top of their band on the register. Properties will be allocated which are suitable in size, type and location based upon the size of the qualifying household, and any medical or other requirements as defined in **Appendix A**.

## 20. Operation of this scheme

- 20.1 Applications to join the Housing Register will be processed by Housing Allocations staff, with input from Housing Management staff to support the creation of sustainable neighbourhoods.
- 20.2 Housing Allocations and Management staff will decide which Band applicants are to be placed in.
- 20.3 Reviews of decisions will be carried out by a member of staff who was not involved in the initial decision.
- 20.4 Discretion in exceptional circumstances can be exercised by the Head of Place Shaping, or the Assistant Director Housing and Environment, whose decision will be final.

## 21. Provision of information regarding applications

- 21.1 Following receipt and processing of an application, applicants will be informed in writing if they have met the Eligibility and Reasonable Preference criteria, and if any Additional Preference has been awarded to their application in determining which Band their application has been placed into.
- 21.2 If requested by applicants, the council will provide such information as above; information relating to decisions taken based upon the facts of the case which determine whether or not to allocate housing, and as far as is possible the predicted wait time until accommodation is likely to become available. The time period an applicant on the Housing Register is difficult to predict due to the unpredictable availability of suitable properties and varying volume of applications.

## 22. Requesting a review

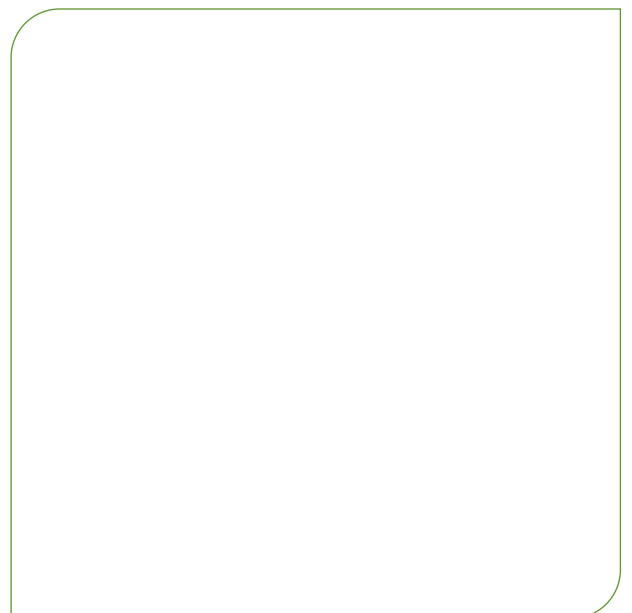
- 22.1 An applicant may request a review of the decision:
  - 22.1.1 whether or not to allocate housing accommodation
  - 22.1.2 that they are ineligible for an allocation due to them being subject to immigration control (160ZA (2))
  - 22.1.3 that they are not a qualifying person
- 22.2 The applicant shall be notified in writing of the decision of the review, and the grounds for that decision.
- 22.3 An applicant found not be qualifying may make a fresh application if they feel that they should be treated as a qualifying applicant. The application must have merit.

## 23. Fraud prevention

- 23.1 Section 171 makes it an offence for anyone seeking assistance from a housing authority under Part 6 of the 1996 Act to:
  - 23.1.1 Knowingly or recklessly give false information, or
  - 23.1.2 Knowingly withhold information which the housing authority has reasonably required the applicant to give
- 23.2 Ground 5 in Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by s 146 of the 1996 Act) enables a housing authority to seek possession of a tenancy granted as a result of a false statement by the tenants or a person acting as the tenant's instigation.
- 23.3 It is important for Slough Borough Council to protect scarce housing resources and any applicant seeking to obtain housing by making a false or misleading statement or failing to inform the Council of a material fact relevant to the outcome of their application, or a change in circumstances, will have their application immediately cancelled. The Council will not hesitate to prosecute any household who has either been allocated a home or applied for a home by using false or fraudulent information.

## 24. Members of the council, staff members and their relations

In order to ensure that the council is seen to be treating all applicants fairly, any application for housing or re-housing from members of the council, employees of the council or associated persons must be disclosed. These applications will be assessed in the normal way but any allocation of housing will require specific approval by the director resources, housing and regeneration. Failure to disclose such matters will lead to the necessary disciplinary actions being taken as set out in the council's governance and policies.



## Appendix A

The CLG *Allocation of Accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England* (June 2012) is a guide used by this council to allocating the appropriate size of housing for any household.

The council will allocate a separate bedroom to the following:

- Married or cohabiting couples
- Adult over the age of 18
- Two children of different sexes aged 10 to 18
- Those who because of a recognised disability require full time overnight care from a recognised carer

The following table is a **guide only** to property size for successful housing clients.

Category	Size of household	Size of property
1	Single person	Studio/Bedsit
2	A couple without children	1 Bedroom
3	Two adults of the same sex and generation for example, flat sharers, or two siblings	2 Bedrooms
4	A couple expecting a child or with a child, including an adult son or daughter	2 Bedrooms
5	A couple with two children of the same sex	2 Bedrooms
6	Two adults of opposite sex who do not live as a couple, for example, brother and sister	2 Bedrooms
7	A couple with two children of opposite sex and both under ten	2 Bedrooms
8	A couple with two children of opposite sex one of whom is over ten	3 Bedrooms
9	A couple with three children	3 Bedrooms
10	A couple with four children (all of the same sex or two of each sex)	3 Bedrooms
11	A couple with four children (three of one sex and one of the opposite sex)	4 Bedrooms
12	A couple with more than four children **	4 Bedrooms

## Appendix 2

### Community contribution

Slough Council believes that people who make a community contribution should have greater priority for accommodation allocated by the Council than those who do not. An increased priority will be given to those households who make a community contribution. All applicants must be eligible, meet the qualifying criteria and reasonable preference criteria too. The following will qualify for Community Contribution.

#### 1. Working households

Households where at least one adult household member is in employment. For the purposes of this Allocations Policy employment is described as having a permanent contract, working as a temporary member of staff or being self-employed. Applicants will only qualify if the worker has been employed for the last 12 months. Verification will be sought at point of application as well as point of offer under the same terms. Applicants must provide payslips, a P60, bank statements, company accounts and returns to HRMC or a verifying letter on employers headed paper in order to qualify.

#### 2. Recognised training and education

This may be achieved by attending higher or further education or by accessing a longer vocational course of study or engaging in a programme of work-related training courses. In all cases the course of study must lead to achieving accredited qualifications and/or certification by a registered awarding body. Study or training may be undertaken at a range of recognised institutions and organisations such as: Further Education College; registered Private Training Provider; registered Voluntary Sector Organisation or University.

A person must have been studying or training against the eligible criteria and definition outlined, for a continuous period of at least 6 months up to the point of application and the same at point of offer. Training must be in addition to, or supplementary to any mandatory training required and may be undertaken in conjunction with volunteering (as long as the volunteering

contributes to the Council's Priorities) to gain further knowledge and experience. Training must be a minimum of 10 hours a month.

Further/higher education candidates must supply evidence of:

- letter from college or university confirming participation in course of study for period of 6 months

For vocational training award the following evidence must be provided:

- an agreed employment action plan developed through a recognised employer/recognised training provider/college plus verification of steps taken towards achievement of action plan targets
- certificate or letter from a registered awarding body for the course or by a recognised training provider as evidence of gaining a recognised vocational qualification or successfully completing accredited work-related training (over a continuous period of at least 6 months)

#### 3. Volunteering

Volunteers must have been volunteering for a continuous period of at least 12 months up to the point of application and the same at point of offer. Volunteering must be for a not-for profit organisation that is recognised by the Council, or a charity that is registered with the Charity Commission or is funded by the Council or another local authority or registered social provider. It is essential the volunteering directly contributes to the well being of **all Slough residents and contributes to the council's priorities** (Safer Communities, Regeneration and Environment, Housing, Health and Wellbeing)

The following evidence will be required to qualify for this contribution. A letter on the relevant organisations headed paper from the manager/chair/registered trustee responsible for volunteers confirming the applicant's involvement in a minimum of 20 hours per month of voluntary work for at least 12 months. This person must not be related to the applicant in any way or have any incidental relationship.







This document can be made available on audio tape, braille or in large print, and is also available on the website where it can easily be viewed in large print.

## Housing Allocation Scheme 2013-2018

If you would like assistance with the translation of the information in this document, please ask an English speaking person to request this by calling 01753 xxxxxx.

यदि आप इस दस्तावेज में दी गई जानकारी के अनुवाद किए जाने की सहायता चाहते हैं तो कृपया किसी अंग्रेजी भाषी व्यक्ति से यह अनुरोध करने के लिए 01753 XXXXXX पर बात करके कहें.

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਵਿਚਲੀ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦਾ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਬੋਲਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਵਿਅਕਤੀ ਨੂੰ 01753 XXXXXX ਉੱਤੇ ਕਾਲ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਬੇਨਤੀ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਕਹੋ।

Aby uzyskać pomoc odnośnie tłumaczenia instrukcji zawartych w niniejszym dokumencie, należy zwrócić się do osoby mówiącej po angielsku, aby zadzwoniła w tej sprawie pod numer 01753 xxxxxx.

Haddii aad doonayso caawinaad ah in lagu turjibaano warbixinta dukumeentigaan ku qoran, fadlan weydiiso in qof ku hadla Inriis uu ku Waco 01753 XXXXXX si uu kugu codsado.

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز میں دی گئی معلومات کے ترجمے کے سلسلے میں مدد چاہئے تو، براہ کرم ایک انگریزی بولنے والے شخص سے 01753 xxxxxx پر کال کر کے اس کی درخواست کرنے کے لئے کہیں۔

## APPENDIX B

### Housing Allocation Scheme 2013 – 2018 - Consultation 'free text' responses.

Some personal details have been redacted. Comments are reproduced in the order they were received.

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I believe the criteria of being resident in Slough for 5 years is too low; I believe this should be 10 or 15 years to stop benefit tourism.

I am also concerned that these new criteria will be taken as just another document to be fraudulently created by some less scrupulous applicants and there needs to be a proper fraud prevention assessment done on all these criteria as recent newspaper reports suggest the council is far too reliant on the public for information to detect fraud.

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The new rules do not go far enough.

Applicants and everyone in the application need to have lived in Slough for five years minimum (unless aged under five of course)

They should be made to show a history of working and not just for 12 months.

Parents who have produced too many children that they cannot afford/house them should not be housed by the council on grounds of overcrowding.

Deliberately overcrowded homes should be made to rent privately.

Serving or disabled members of HM Forces should be housed before anyone else

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I think one suitable offer is too limited (Q 4) but don't propose a completely open-ended offer either. I would suggest up to three suitable offers could be declined before becoming ineligible.

Q6 splitting an area the size of Slough into three preference areas seems at first glance to be acceptable, but mobility issues should be considered carefully. For example a short school run for a car owner may be acceptable, but the same distance for someone without vehicle access can prove very difficult to manage, considering the bottle necks that exist across pinch points such as roads over the railway.

Q7 I disagree that being in employment for 12 months should add priority if it means those who are unemployed are disadvantaged - if anything it is unemployed people that should gain priority for low-cost housing.

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Social housing should be seen and considered by everybody (the council, the tenants and the other residents) a privilege and not a right. Therefore only deserving people should be granted this privilege. These are individuals who represent no source of trouble of any kind and are respectful of the properties they are given as well as of their neighbours and of other people's or public properties.

If anybody in social housing commits an act of disrespect towards their property or properties or people in the neighbourhood (vandalism, noise pollution or anti-social behaviour in general), they should be evicted from the property quickly and lose such privilege.

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What is the Council and Housing Associations doing to provide more shared accommodation (HMOs, not self-contained bedsits or flats) for single people?

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Single people under the age of 35 and claiming benefit are no longer eligible for council/HA flats of their own, quite rightly in my view, but this policy assumes that there is sufficient provision of HMO accommodation to meet their needs. Most HMOs provided by private sector landlords are already taken by "young professional" or employed tenants, and there can be strong competition for the limited supply, especially as more and more Councils are imposing licensing and registration schemes on landlords and issuing Article 4 directions to place strict controls or even block the creation of new HMOs.

There is no mention of the needs of single people in the preference scheme proposals (besides children leaving care homes), or any indication that the Council or HAs recognise there is a problem with supply of HMOs or intend to adapt any housing as HMOs. Yet this is precisely the category of housing most vulnerable to exploitation by the tiny proportion of poor landlords. Slough was notoriously identified in the press recently as a centre for "beds in sheds", with recent immigrants, the homeless and low-paid young working people apparently being the most affected.

I therefore feel that Slough needs to do more than simply change its allocations policy for social housing, but also look to change its housing mix to create more single-person and shared housing units.

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To make sure that those who have been living in Slough for 5 years have done so legally (not in a shed). Want evidence of council tax bill/payment. I currently volunteer and work. However the projects are every so often. Would this not be considered volunteering?

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I think the new scheme is brilliant recognising the good hard working people in the community who would like to stay and live in the town. I hope it comes into effect sooner rather than later.

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1. Why are elderly and disabled people not considered as a priority group or their particular needs considered?

2. Who makes the decisions about the fairness of council decisions?

3 Why is there no independent appeals system to ensure fairness?

4 Should people in need have choice removed from them? Don't they have the right to live in the community that they want to?

5. Why are the special circumstances of people which may be taken into account not spelled out in a transparent way so people can see if it is meeting the reasonable expectations of the Slough people?

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The new principle of Local Housing For local People, Rewarding those who are good tenants and those who contribute to the community are to be welcomed. The devil is as ever in the detail. Removal of choice in almost ever area. Failure to address the outstanding problems of elderly peoples priority housing. A wide rang of people and member of slough families or carers loose their housing right but have to rely on the discretion of council officers when there is no independent appeals system.

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Would it change anything with the current waiting list?

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People who are on a lower wages and struggling with saving for deposits for mortgage's & private rents being very expensive in the area. I would hope it would help people like me and my partner, who work but are on a lower income

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I am a thirty five year old manager excellent, credit, council tax payer yet I can not afford the rents in the local area as a single person. I have been on the list since 2009 and an upstanding member of the community; why is a professional such as myself cast aside and continually stepping back in line...all other areas have preference.

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I believe a tax payer with good job yet struggling should have as much consideration as foreign homeless, unemployed.my place in the que should not be jumped over by others just because I am a sensible, tax paying, law abiding single person.do I have to wait until I can no longer afford to live.

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Since I put in my application I have received no indication that it had been addressed, until I received the letter regarding this survey. Therefore I have no knowledge of which Band I am in. Now I know I can go to the offices or call but I am working and have no time to do this.

There are plenty of working people like myself who are not running to the Council for everything they need and all they are asking for is some support in being placed somewhere they can call home! It is particularly discouraging when you see and hear how people have been placed in homes just because they are pregnant or have been in the borough for two minutes. Now I know that comment sounds very disparaging but its fact!

It took me over seven years to fill out my application form because I was so angry when I went to the Council offices in person to find out about accommodation, when I was technically homeless. I was informed in a matter of fact way "Can't help, won't help, only if I'm pregnant"!!!!

I believe people who have been in long continuous employment and are willing to pay full rental cost should be given a fair advantage.

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I am a full time key worker in Slough and have been for over 5 years. I rent privately and get no government benefits. I have applied as a single person for housing. I applied 3 months ago and have heard nothing. I am now moving in with a stranger to their spare room and have had to dispose of all my furniture and other possessions as I have no storage for this. I cannot afford to live with the increase in private rents. If the system was fairer for single working people who contribute to the community I may have been offered a place to live. In two weeks I will be homeless, female and nearing 50 years of age. This isn't a fair system at present in my opinion.

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Why are you not doing that people born and living in Slough take priority?

Why not use the old Slough library as living accommodation when it ceases to be the library. The 3rd floor could be turned into single men bedsits, the 2nd floor could be for single woman and the 1st and ground floors could be for family accommodation - would make good use of the building and you would only need to put a nice façade on the outside to make it look more appealing.

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Young people are being put off from joining the list because they are told that they have low priority because they are single - that is not fair.

If they were born and live in Slough all there lives, they should be entitled to have accommodation within a reasonable length of time - some of the houses that are being built could actually be turned into a shared house with bedsits so that instead of having one family rehoused, you could rehouse 3 or more single persons.

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I saw a comment that people with bad money management would have more difficulty than others, I think as long as they pay their rent and bills, what they do with the rest of there money should not be looked at. As long as they are in employment and pay all their bills they should still be eligible.

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The whole system really frustrates me due to people's morals and how the system is used to their advantage. For example, my parents moved to the Caribbean and therefore I had to live between my grandparents and my uni halls for three years with no help (including any benefits). At this same time, someone I am aware of was living in a council funded flat with their son and has further been given a two bedroom house with a garden. This person is in education granted, however it is obvious they enjoy the benefits of funded housing and others because I am yet to see them carry out a full time job! Meanwhile I and my partner rent privately and if we went through an estate agent we would not be able to even afford the same flat we live in now along with all of the bills, plus the two cars we have to afford to run so that we can work full time.

Essentially, people who have not worked and are in 'education' receive a funded two bedroom house whereas me and my partner who work full time struggle to afford a one bedroom flat with no help from any one else. Very frustrating! I am not stating here that I would like to be funded, because I am motivated by being independent of all assistance and doing things the correct way, rather than taking advantage of schemes that are meant for other people in genuine need.

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How long does it take to be offered a house?

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There are certain area's in slough that are a hot spot for drugs, prostitution and violence, I feel that some of the changes being made will leave families with children vulnerable. The reason being they will have very little choice in the area they raise their families in. This is an infringement of basic human rights, and I feel that the government needs to review these changes as it will be very damaging to family lives and young families being raised. I have found his very disturbing, considering I am on the waiting list with my husband and children.

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Does this include families that are overcrowded? Like 1 adult and 3 kids in 1 room

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I'd like it to be for overcrowded families not just people who have worked

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I think a lot more help towards generally hard working people should be considered instead of people that haven't worked a day in there life. It disgusts me how hard working citizens such as me have no chance but we work hard for the life we are trying to live unlike people who just sign on and sit about. They are given help as soon as they contact the council.

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Most of the changes seems unfair to me, especially towards people who are on a waiting list for a long time.

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In my point of view the priority should be given to these who can't afford to rent a private accommodation and are over 40 or with kids.

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Council houses are known to be long term homes; can the same be said for housing association properties?

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I think some points in this need scheme need to addressed cuz they're not right.

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People who are already on housing resister. They will be in the new scheme or there status will be unchanged?

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Only those who have lived in Slough for three years should be eligible.

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What with people who lived in Slough less than 5 years and are existing waiting for a council accommodation?

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I think for new applicant time 5 years is ok but for existing applicant can't act back.

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It would be nice to know where you are on the list & a rough guide to how long you may have to wait for a property.

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How this scheme can help people who are already waiting for response for their allocation?

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I think it's good and it's a quicker way to identify people who are more in a need of house.

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I feel that that this proposed criteria will be much more fair than in the past and will help people like myself who simply want to be housed and do not expect the council to pay for half the rent as they are able to pay themselves.

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Very good

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I think that current council tenants living in flats or maisonettes (with no rent arrears or anti social behaviour etc) should be given priority if they wish to move into a house if they have been in the current flat/maisonette for a certain time - maybe 2 years. As this will free up the flat/maisonette for new applicants that are waiting for properties. I think that this is a fairer way to allocate properties rather than new applicants being given houses when existing tenants are waiting for houses.

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I think that people who work hard on low earnings deserve social housing and would respect the properties more

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Question 7 has no reference to people who have retired, but have worked all their life.

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I cannot understand why people of a dubious nature are housed in areas, which have a record of trouble free tenancy. For example people on council

list taking priority over people awaiting housing, on housing association lists. Are these people not vetted, before being housed in trouble free areas?

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I think the so-called additional preference was long over due, I think it is fair that individuals who have always live in this borough should be given priority for accommodation within it borders. Furthermore, working or doing any meaningful voluntary work is also very important preference because it makes a lot of sense that those who work are able to pay rent and contribute positively to our borough. Moreover, I'm also glad that the new scheme place members or individuals who have served in the arm forces as priority for the allocation scheme. Somehow, it seems to me that this new scheme might really target people and individuals who have live in this town for a substantial period of time and are contributing somehow to its development and progress, I think it is a very good skim as it might help those who really need help and not those who view the system as a right for which there are no responsibility attached.

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Do not believe you should be ineligible if you are not overcrowded as the private sector does not provide such long term assurances for family

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Can a single parent who works full time with one child be entitled to a 2 bedroom property?

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I think you may need to take into consideration the size of people's property looking at the new scheme I would not be entitled to a 2 bedroom property but the current size of my 1 bedroom flat is not adequate for us both I work full time he goes to full time nursery and I feel cheated when so many people I know have the same number of children none of them work but are all in a 2 bed property I feel that parents that go into the mother and baby unit jump the queue if a 2 bed property comes available people who have been on the list and who are already on the list should get priority and the others should go in the one bedroom. I feel the whole allocation scheme supports the people who don't support themselves if I didn't work and was on benefits I feel I would be treated a bit different.

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People still need to considered if they are out of work or single parents also don't change policy regarding what age two children of the different sex can no longer share a bedroom as this will exempt families from gaining a new property

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Will people already on the register lose their position?

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People, who are unfit to work, train or volunteer shouldn't be discriminated against.

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Will NHS staff be seen as a "positive contribution to the community"? As I myself work for the NHS & have been on the housing list for 5 years now.

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I believe the following statement in question 4:

"The council will make one suitable offer of accommodation within Slough. If the applicant turns this down, they will be ineligible to apply again"

This is completely unjust! Me and my partner have been on the list for 5 years now, waiting patiently for a place. To wait this long and then feel pressured or forced into accepting the first place offered would be morally wrong. Instead, in circumstances of individuals waiting a long period of time this should allow more flexibility and reward.

Lastly question 6: Splitting the boroughs into just 3 areas doesn't allow for



more choice at all. Currently you can specify accurate areas of a town to allow good choice. To restrict to 3 areas would put yourselves in a situation where you would have a lot of unhappy tenants, especially if you go ahead with forcing them into accepting the first accommodation offered. Further, this may even increase tenants reapplying to get back on the list.

I do agree with some of the restrictions and believe it was well overdue, however you need to rethink your strategy with some of the points I have raised.

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for myself I had found it very helpful while my cousin was living with as I'm asthmatic and diabetic, over the last 2 years I've had to go to hospital with chest infection, we' have ask if we could be housed together as I'm his prime carer as well, he suffer with Alzheimer's has 3 pro laps discs and also have other health issue and he needs my care 24 hours and 7 days a week and has no one else, costing him a fortune to refurbish his flat why have you put him into a one bedroom flat on his own?

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Most welcome-... proposal to those contributing positively to Slough.

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Well recommended

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I think this scheme is very good.its help who ever need the house ...

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This is some new for me but I think that application is good

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Well, it says on your website that people only wait 5 years maximum I have been waiting for 7 years for a council house I have a good track housing record and I also work! I need a place to live near my house because of my children's schools and I do not have a car. So you can imagine I don't have a lot of money to spend.

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As I have been on the list for many years already, would this mean I would keep my place or start at the bottom?

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I think that there are some good points in this new scheme focusing on people who are generally wanting a settled home, buy not allowing people who abuse the system and previous properties this will mean people who are trying harder will get housed quicker hopefully.

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People who have been waiting nearly six years but have not been made any offer's, so when this scheme comes into force and they do not meet the criteria, are their names just gone be removed from the waiting list? So all the time they have spent waiting patiently will be for Nothing!

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Will it help to get a home early?

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I am living in 2 bedroom flat with 3 children and my husband at least we should have a priority.

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Do all previous applicants need to reapply when the new system start?

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The criteria to be used for allocation are fair.

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The scheme looks good and should help people.

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I total agree with the proposed housing allocation scheme.

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I think just fail rent can not be used as most are because of the housing benefit mix up.

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I think it's unfair

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I think your idea is excellent. Both me and my wife work full time, we pay our rent, childcare, we don't claim benefits and at the end of the month don't have enough money to rent privately or to save up for a mortgage. We are stuck in council bed sit- one bedroom, bathroom and kitchen with our 10 months old son. We ve been waiting for a bigger place for 3 years. I feel really angry when I see all those junkies and teenage single mothers getting one, 2 bedrooms houses and flats. I feel that WE, as a normal married couple with a child have no chance at the moment of getting bigger place. Hopefully your changes will bring some positive results.

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I question the change of older person's properties being used to house young people. These properties are often downstairs flats or bungalows which reduces the stock for older people to move into when unable to live in an upstairs property.

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This only relates to new tenants. I am a good tenant who pays rent on time and does not cause any anti-social behaviour issues. Therefore why can't people like myself have more choice as where I live so I don't have to tolerate the anti-social that I am experiencing at the moment..

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Also if I was applying for a council property now at the age of 60 I would be given a downstairs property. Why can't I now have the choice to move into a downstairs property having being a good tenant since moving in to an upstairs flat which was suitable for me then but is not now?

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Just to clarify, if someone is offered a property and they reject the property will they then not be offered any more, you only get to view one property..

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I am concerned about the fact that the borough will be split into 3 areas. How will they be split, for example will you get cippenham haymill and britwell as one area. If that is the case and you are offered a property in britwell, and this is one area you don't want to move to do you then lose out and not get offered anything else.

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I do not think this scheme will work as there are many people who have only recently moved to Slough maybe for work or education and you require them to be here for 5 years.

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I have been on the list for over 10yrs and it seems to me that you will change my band c to another and I go back to the bottom of the list.

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Why penalize someone for single-choice preference when all they want is to be near their own family, easy access in latter day and maybe a garden for their companion eg,dog or cat. I have witnessed unemployed people get housed,early release cons. drunks and drug takers who are getting their rents paid by jussive got to stop as this is not going to help me any seems to me that next year I am 55yrs old so maybe I might get an offer!!!! Who knows?

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I feel that the decision as to whether someone gets housing or not should be on an individual case basis. That is, people should be interviewed and all necessary information/documentation should be gathered then. This also applies to situations where people's circumstances change.. eg. the loss of work, illness including mental health problems.

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Part of your application preference is those in full time employment within slough, is this correct?

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Also will those who work within the social care sector but not necessary at a hospital, be given preference or be part of the preference?

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Personally I've been on the waiting list since 2009/10 but still have no idea where i am with this. Just by communicating with possible tenants every 6-12mths would be beneficial to all around.

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And anyone who works in business should know that communication is the key!

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Some people have a council house and don't live there. They live in different house and coming only to collect the post. Its not fair because there are a lot of people who really need the council property. That happens for example in Chalvey area. I don't know why council ignore it.

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I have been on the register for 5 years so When will I know if I am NOW eligible? Or is this "consultation" a polite way off telling people there off the register?

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I feel people who have been in permanent employment for at least 2 years is more than enough proof that they are capable of paying rent and are responsible enough to have a house.

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People with a low income will struggle to ever own their own home, I thought this is what the housing register was all about helping people who are trying in life not pushing them aside for people of benefits just because they decided to have 8 kids in a 2 bedroom house? I can't understand why these people are made a priority when there are hard working people out there who actually want to better themselves not feed off government money?

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Some of these questions seem to exclude penisioners who still have children going to school; was that the intention?

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Mostly, I agree with the suggestions, but, since I am a retired person with children going to school, I don't want to be excluded from the register

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my mother and my self live together my mother is diabetic and also has renal failure and no longer walks so is hoisted all the time

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I wonder why only couples with kids are given priority , most of people are using their kids and that s not fair.

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I would like to be contacted once in a while to know the status of my whereabouts on the housing list. I do understand that there probably isn't enough time for the council to do this, however it would restore the hope that one day I might be offered social housing

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What about housing for over 60 aged people.

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what priority will this scheme give those tenants have who lived in slough for more than five years but have never been afforded any offer ever while immigrants who have just recently arrived in the country have been housed straight away?

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people who are young & wants to get further education, and struggling with the accommodation, they should get priority to accommodate. e.g myself i live in slough since march 2006 started school in Slough and Eton then i went to Uxbridge college done BTEC FIRST DIPLOMA & BTEC NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN ICT PRACTITIONER. after that i wanted to get into University but unfortunately i couldn't go because i didn't had a permanent place to live

in and study in peace. i wish i had my own flat so i could have peace of mind to do further education and study in peace. because i been living in a private rent share flat, which i dont think anyone who really want to study can do his best in a share house. its been a year that i am working full time now i am still living in share flat. hope i get a permanent place so i could go university.

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why do uk citazens not get first choice on a place to live?

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why do people get a que jump who are not from the uk ?

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any1 who has lived the uk all there lives should have first priority in there area with all different situations should be entitled fairly. giving teenagers places causes pregnancys partys bad social behaviour and problems i am a 28 year old man i have worked and recently fell ill and want 2 live alone why should i be placed at the back end of the list i should be before alot of people.

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I am happy that you have change the criteria for people on waiting list. Finally normal hard working people who have lived and worked in slough more than five years has got the chance to get a social house.

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Some people may be in accommodation already but require a move on grounds of medical reason in your policies you dont mention the fact that you will get that persons property back on your books?

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will I be able to be accepted has a council tenants with 4 children has a housewife and been in slough for around 5/6 years

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happy with the scheme and hope to be accepted has soon has possible.

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After private renting for 6 years in an unsuitable area and having the purple that live upstairs awake all night as they don't work I'm please the rules may change as this may give me the change of getting a house

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I am aged 60 years and been told I am on a shorter list specifically for older people. As yet I haven't been informed of anything with regards my place on the list or current availability of property. Can this be rectified so that I and other tenants in this age group are more readily informed?

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When will it all take affect and will there be a new form to fill out?

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What are you doing about over 50's & 60's who can live independantly on their own. I was born in Slough and have lived around the area all my life.

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You should be making more effort to house the over 50's and 60's. Not just sheltered accommodation but 1 bedroom flats or houses for people in this age group who are still working full time and have all their facalties!!

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My Questions are as follows.

If an outsider comes to this Town and is Housed then go on to have even more Children will they be given 2 properties paid by Housing benefit to accommodate 11 children like the man down the road [REDACTED]. ?

What are the council doing to get the children back with the Parents that live in Care of Social Services in Slough if they are not in any danger ?

Are the Council/Social Services, supporting the Parents of the looked after Children and what evidence can you provide showing this.

What further education are you supplying to the people who come from this

Town and may of not completed there Education in school to qualifie for housing will it also be run by an English speaking Charity's and what is there funding allocation ?

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It is about time the people of this Town originally born here were given priority over outsiders with housing needs and Education.

There are thousands on the Housing register side stepped because the outsiders, keep having children what are the Council going to do about this situation as having more Children pushes the closer to the Top of the waiting list and other Families are put at the bottom creating Que Jumping on the grounds of overcrowding.

What are the council doing in getting the outsiders back to work to make the Housing Benefit/Income support bill lower.

How many Social housing properties are being built this year in Slough.

will the Council reinstate rent officers.

Will the Council be sending out housing Managers to check houses and back gardens and communal areas more regular than every ten years.

What is the council doing about subletting can they provide any evidence of what they have done to stop it .

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People need more variety of housing in more safe areas.families need properties in non violent areas.

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The new scheme is goodfor those people who have been waitng on the housing register for more than 5 years.

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this scheme is better than the last one but i wish the waiting time is less to get alot of people of the register and into social housing

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I am concerned that those who have been on the waiting list for a long time, their application now may well be at threat. You need to consider as many aspects of life as possible, as mothers with young children and those at school wont have time to contribute to the community or other aspects of this new scheme.

Prioritising Slough residents, who have lived and contributed through employment with their taxes, should be prioritised.

Greater measured should be placed to prevent fraudulent claims so those that need housing are catered for.

Also, the need for an additional bedroom is a very common driver for applying for housing, so how can you possibly eliminated such applicants? Where there are e.g. four children in a single bedroom, 2 girls and two boys, an additional bedroom is essential and would make a huge difference.

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Will this new scheme affect famillies who are on the tenancy deposit sceme for a long time?

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I think this is a good idea! With the other scheme you had to go to the council to find out where you are on the housing list, i hope that this will reduce the waiting list and that adults with children will be given priority!

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Can I get council house quickly after I participated in the questionnaire and/or government scheme?

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if all ready on list an been on it over 4 yrs. how will u make the change over of waiting list time as the old scheme runs on a date of application system??? i believe this system has not been beneficial for people on waiting list and glad the system is all going to change. ive been on the list over 4 yrs ive gone up not down and am at same point i was at in 2011 :(

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should make it simpler for people who been in slough for over ten years and have children.

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the people who are already in waiting list for more then 4 years, this scheme will also help them?i m a single mother with 2 kids and I have applied for house for more then 4 years and I need house because I live in flat and I need more space but can't change house because no one offer their property on dss,i looked so many properties but can't get any on dss,do you think this scheme can help me to get house faster? [REDACTED]

---

this seems a fairer way to appoint housing

---

will this decrease the waiting time for council homes.....have been on waiting list for years since i was 18 yrs old i am now 30 in full time employment.... but because i has no criminal record or drug ,alcohol addiction or mental health issues he is not entitled as yet oh yes and born and bred in slough

---

People who are in constant arrears of Council Tax should removed from Council housing.

---

At this time I am not sure how (and if) this scheme helps me to be offered a house quicker than before. I understand the changes but is it really efficient and fair for the applicants?

---

I am a single mum with three children (two boys and one girl). I have been struggling to find a suitable size of a property for my children and myself. I can never afford to find a decent house which is just enough for four of us. I have been waiting to be offered since 2007 and I hope this new scheme helps me find a decent house for my family as I have been a good tenant with no debt arrears, I hardly complain to the landlord as long as he looks after the property properly.

---

Will pensioners and thus their age be taken into account with the above suggestions - I.e will we be penalised for not having worked in the previous 12 months?

---

Will I be contacted as I have not had any contact from the council since I have been on the register, I think I have been forgotten about. Will this happen with the new scheme?

---

Waiting for more than 4 years for someone who has already lived in slough for over 30 years is not right.

---

I have lived and worked in slough for over 35 years and have had my education in slough. I currently live in one bedroom with my wife and two

children and have waited over 4 years on the housing list . Something here is not right.

---

I pretty much agree with the scheme i think its fair

---

I have been on the council waiting list for over five years and am still waiting, Over this time I have seen peolpe from all walks of life abuse the sytem. The saddest part is that theyhave all managed to get properties.I think the new proposals are a better as they will be fairer and encourage people to actively better there lives.

---

will this scheme help me get housed?

---

people who are to ill to work and need help for the first time ever from the council needs to be housed quicker rather than immigrants being housed that come into the country.

---

Really need an urgent council house please and what ever have planned in this form is perfect like it.

---

We strongly agree to the scheme as this will ensure families who have lived and contributed to sloughs growth are given primary needs.

---

The scheme doesnt help people in my position ie working in slough (education), private renting, joint income of 30,000 with children get into housing association or council. Private rent takes large amount of income.

---

Note: selected band D but never been told?

---

I feel most of the homeless residents fit into the criteria were you will not help them. I feel the problem is these other people coming from different boroughs who are allocated housing in slough. You need to kick all these people who come from abroad, and getting brand new houses, when we have enough homeless people on the street, sleeping in parks. Most of the people on my street are from other boroughs with 5,6,7 children, get them back in there own borough's or get them onto training courses from 9am - 5pm... I feel Housing Associations are useless as them let people sublet, single mothers who have husbands, who were are receiving full benefits. Make the Housing Associations full their fingers out and start investigating all their residents who have partners and family living with them.... Its a total joke

---

Will everyone already on the housing list need to reapply?

---

I think the new scheme sounds great. It seems to benefit those in most need and those who contribute to the area.

---

I am not allowed (by my believe) to take a mortgage. The only way is to have a saving and buy in cash.

---

Would this schema consider such as issue?


---

I am currently on a transfer list because in short i'm in a 2bed with my kids a 16yr boy 18yr girl and 23yr boy and I am also dissabled (wheelchair), the property I am in is not suitable to our health and wellbeing. I am confused as to why I cannot be moved as a priority because I see reports that because of the so called bedroom tax there is a shortage of 2 bed houses so why can I not move to a 3 or 4 bed sooner.

---

Your Housing policies are not very clear and I am being treated unfairly I seriously am thinking of going further (MP, Mayor and all Media outlets) with

my situation.

---

I like the idea how you offer the house, that you reduced it to one offer. I think for those who really need their place, one offer would be enough.

---

is there bidding system like locata

---

nationals from the EU putting pressure on the system

---

priority should be for British citizen

---

When will this start

---

How will it affect if your already on the list for example I am between 6-12 in my chosen areas it's been 5 years will this new scheme penalize me if it comes into force?

---

SBC have been far too lenient with overseas citizens

Not caring for those who have lived in slough all their life and have contributed

Fairly to the system by means if education, work, paying taxes etc

Why do we pay taxes and work full time and put so much in to the community

If we are to gain nothing when we need you the most.

More new builds needed in upton lea and Wexham where there is a lack of

Houses available esp 2-3 bed flats

Stop people who are frm other boroughs or have nothing to do

With slough getting council houses and prioritize those who have been

Contributing for last 10 years at least to slough 5 is not enough. I have lived in slough

34 years from birth and been working 19 years I have been waiting since

2008 and had barely 2 offers which we're not in suitable location that's all

---

Priority given to people born in Slough area so that extended families may remain close.

No priority given to single mothers.

---

No priority given to families with multiple children.

Applicants who are willing to accept an offer of housing anywhere in the

borough will automatically have more choices and opportunity open to them

however they should not be given higher priority than anyone else in the list.

They may not wish to be housed in certain areas as it may not suit their needs

or may increase their cost of living. Also three areas to chose from is

insufficnet as Slough is highly populated with many areas/wards.

---

You did not mention anything about 16-18 year olds who leave school and get

pregnant but seem to always get a council property and always seem priority

even though they have never contributed to this countries tax system?

---

I like the way this is now in favour of people who want to get on in life who

may find it hard to buy/privately rent, people who work and contribute to the

tax system. In recent years it seems that to get a council property you needed

to be out of work or be young and pregnant. I feel ha people who have

contributed to the tax system for a certain time would always be priority.

---



I think there are flaws that need to be addressed in the inequality of the rents that are paid by housing association tenants and council tenants. In a HA you have to pay a lot more rent than someone who lives in a council property which is not justified because ultimately they are both social housing. This makes moving in an exchange situation very unattractive for example someone in a two bed HA pays more rent than those who live in a three bed council house so when you are on homeswapper etc the exchange is not encouraging because your being asked to pay more for less living space.

---

What happens to people who are currently on the waiting list? Do the rule changes apply to them also or is it only new applicants. Also, I think it is offensive to offer someone over the age of 50 a studio or bedsit, especially given that sometimes people have not put themselves in an unfortunate position of being in need of social housing.

---

Why are SBC so concerned about young people being made more independent - they have not put anything into the system and therefore do not rightfully deserve to be rewarded with housing being taken away from someone for example who has either lost their job or sustained some injury or illness that prevents them from continuing in a career or any work.

---

1. Is the waiting list going to move much quicker?

---

2. Is a family of 6+ applicable for a 4 bedroom house?

---

I think there are people in Slough that have been waiting for more than 2 years for a Council House and have not heard anything from the Council. I think the waiting list should be moving much quicker because some people are living in extreme circumstances that require the moving of a house.

---

priority should be given if persons have been in slough a long time or if from generations from slough first

---

I have seen that Former and Serving members of the armed forces will get priority. I am a serving member of the emergency services (Police) covering Slough. Will I get any priority for that.

---

Is this scheme only open to UK passport holders? T

---

No one who is not a UK passport holder should be allowed to join the scheme. The council should put British people's housing needs first and foremost.

---

What happens to tenants who are awaiting a transfer, will a new criteria be introduced?

---

I agree with some of the scheme, but have concerns about those tenants that remain on transfer waiting lists to be rehoused into suitable accommodation. Is there going to be a new scheme implemented to meet their needs.

---

The only thing that concerns me is for people like myself. A single mother, working part-time living with Epilepsy in private renting. I'm currently 1 month in arrears due to rent increase last year, will this hinder my chance of getting a council property? There have been no other issues. I'm in this position as I simply can't afford to live in my home any longer and this is a massive worry for myself and my 3 year old son. I do currently have a DHP included within my HB which is a massive help for me.

Yes I've lived in Slough all my life and yes I'm working but the arrears worries me.

---

I think the scheme is positive.

---

What are the plans for provisions for homeless, ex-offenders and those with long standing arrears they are working to pay off. (It seems to me that if someone is trying to sort themselves out this new proposed plan will not take that into account at all.)

---

The aggression towards council staff clause is ludicrous. Unless someone is convicted for such an offence it should not be taken into account. This is a completely objective thing and means that different council staff members are free to interpret what constitutes aggressive behaviour. In addition, unfortunately (and I work in a similar environment) housing officers are dealing with people who are often under extreme stress and difficult living arrangements. When they feel that no-one can help them I believe it is completely unreasonable to cut off any future chance they have for housing if they become upset.

---

I think it is very positive that changes are being made to the way housing is allocated to support those who have lived in Slough for a long period and make a positive contribution. It is also positive that poor behaviour by families that causes misery to many of their neighbours will no longer be rewarded with a secure tenancy.

---

I think that high priority people are being overlooked so far so I would like to see a change in that.

---

Feel you should not be taken off the list if you refuse the first house you are offered

---

It is right to have a scheme that takes into account a prospective tenant's commitment to Slough, their integrity and honesty towards their housing needs and their ability to pay the rent, otherwise it adds to the burden of Slough Council and denies genuine applicants their place.

---

I think the 42k income is set too low, with the price of living, rents etc it should be raised to about 50k, again it seems to be people who are on an average wage are being penalised again, 42k is not a big income when we pay for everything, don't get tax credits or any other benefits and especially how hard it is to get on the housing/mortgage ladder. Me and my partner are great contributors to the community, me as a community support worker and my partner being employed by the local college.

---

What if you have a disabled child in your family. What is the priority?

---

I would like you to be more involved in some of these cases with disabled children.

---

If in band C will you still be eligible to be housed?

---

I agree with helping working people but don't agree that if they are already in 'adequate' accommodation they will not be housed. I believe financial matters should count as the home may be big enough or just the right size, however they may be financially struggling to afford it which could cause people to go back to being unemployed.

---

I'm really hoping this new scheme will help myself, my partner and our children

we are good honest people who pay our bills council tax, rent etc

my parnter works full time in slough

we got to the top of the council list in band b for a 4 bedroom property and we was 4th on the list and a lady told me it would be about 12 months wait i was very happy with this, didnt hear anything for sometime so i called up slough council to be told i was now 8th on the list and when i asked why i was told there was people in more need than me, again i left it for sometime and called again and was told i was now 16th on the list and again i was told people in more need than me. i find this very unfair as my partner does not have a great income and we always make sure our council tax and rent etc is paid on time and it not easy as we are in a private rented house which is 1200 pound a month. im stuffing from really bad depression which has caused a massive anxiety disorder for which im on anti depression tablets and talking theapys.

---

Will you advised if you believe you should no longer be on the list,?

Will you update to advise where you are on the list and how long approx. you still have left to possible be offered somewhere.

Could you send details out to people on the list regarding part buy part rent schemes.

---

It should help shape up our borough and benefit those who make an effort to be positive members of the community. Thank you

---

Would like to see young slough residents, that is people born and lived all their lives in Slough, be able to access one bedroomed properties on a waiting list. Most young residents do not earn enough to rent locally.

---

why only slough does the applicant wait 7 years to get housing allocation ?

---

I think some people have more priority more then others,so it would be great if you offer the houses who need mos. like over crowded, old people and those who have a medical problem.

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**SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Neighbourhood and Community Services Scrutiny Panel  
**DATE:** 05 September 2013  
**CONTACT OFFICER:** Kevin Young – Community Participation Manager  
**(For all enquiries)** (01753) 474059  
**WARD(S):** All  
**PORTFOLIO:** Councillor James Swindlehurst

**PART I - TO NOTE**

**TENANT LED CO-REGULATION IN SLOUGH – SLOUGH CUSTOMER SENATE (SCS)**

1 **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to:

- Inform the panel about how tenant led co-regulation is structured in Slough
- How it meets statutory requirements
- Explain the background/role of the Slough Customer Senate
- How effective tenant led co-regulation has been
- How funds relating to the Slough Customer Senate are being spent

2 **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

That the Panel scrutinise the arrangements for tenant led co-regulation in Slough to ensure that it is working effectively.

3 **Slough Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

Priorities:

- Economy and Skills
- Health and Wellbeing
- Regeneration and Environment
- Housing
- Safer Communities

By the very nature of the scrutiny role that SCS undertake their role impacts on all of the above priorities. By developing the skills of all volunteers (including those involved in SCS) this can improve the economy by empowering more volunteers and where possible potentially leading to new employment opportunities using the skills developed from volunteering.

Good quality housing (and housing management service delivery) is essential to health and wellbeing. Working together with the community results in a better

environment, regeneration opportunities (as in Britwell) and ultimately leads to sustainable and safer communities.

**Civic responsibility** – SCS are championing the needs of Slough Borough Council tenants and leaseholders. As ambassadors they are leading by example and demonstrating that taking an active part in representing their neighbourhoods can make a real difference. The impact can improve neighbourhoods, communities and the town as a whole, showing that everyone can make a difference no matter how big or small.

**Improving the image of the town** – SCS are working with Slough’s diverse community to reach out, engage and involve tenants and leaseholders in improving services, neighbourhoods and the image of the town. A town which everyone can be proud of.

4 **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)**

Not Applicable

5 **Other Implications**

(a) Financial

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) supports the operation of SCS with a commitment to resource both the operational costs and expenses associated with each review and the overhead costs associated with the Panel Structure (further recruitment, training and mentoring, administration, expenses (including office costs at Fox Road) and publicity). An annual allocation of up to £35,000 is available to cover these costs.

It is intended that a system of regular review/assessment of the panel’s effectiveness and impact is undertaken by the Head of Housing and Assistant Director of Housing and Environment.

(b) Risk Management

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigating action</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Legal	The introduction of Tenant Scrutiny in Slough will enable the authority to meet the co-regulation standards as set out in regulatory framework for social landlords introduced in April 2012	Area Panels have been developed to ‘bolster’ co-regulation and act as a support to SCS by working in partnership and identifying service failures which may need further investigation/scrutiny
Property	None	None
Human Rights	None	None
Health and Safety	None	None
Employment Issues	None	None
Equalities Issues	None	None
Community Support	None	None

Communications	Poor communication of service standards and service reviews increases the risk of complaints and doubt over value for money	SCS produces regular articles in the bi-monthly housing service newsletter (Streets Ahead). SCS is also working on a communications plan which will include a marketing campaign to raise awareness of the panel and its achievements, and also act as a vehicle to draw in new members. A new independent website is also in development.
Community Safety	None	None
Financial	None	None
Timetable for delivery	None	None
Project Capacity	None	None
Other	None	None

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act implications in connection with this report.

**OTHER LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The National standards for Social Housing became a requirement for Housing Providers in spring 2010.

The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standard sets out a requirement for social housing landlords to offer all tenants opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing. This must include opportunities to:

- Influence housing related policies and how housing related services are delivered.
- Be involved in scrutinising performance in delivering housing related services

Housing providers must offer tenants support so that they are more able to be effectively engaged, involved and empowered.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

A “preferred composition” for SCS membership was agreed that, as far as possible, aims for a membership of SCS which will reflect the existing tenant profile/composition.

Training and (independent) support will be available for Panel Members.

## 6 **Supporting Information**

*(From appendix A, section 9.15):*

*The Localism Act 2011 and the new regulatory standard for Resident Involvement and Empowerment both anticipate an enhanced role for tenants in relation to scrutiny. These regulatory and statutory changes has provided new challenges for the Council, as it seeks to have the right mechanisms, support, information and internal drivers in place for effective tenant scrutiny in the Borough.*

*This enhanced role for tenants requires substantial investment in skills and capacity building, matched with an increased focus on value for money. There is a general consensus that tenant involvement in scrutinising value for money should not just focus on financial efficiencies, but also on service delivery, investment, and quality.*

### **Tenant led Co-Regulation in Slough**

- 6.1 Tenant led co-regulation in Slough was developed during 2011. In January of that year a recruitment campaign was launched through the tenant newsletter (then known as Housing Service News) and via the website. Slough Borough Council (SBC) tenants and leaseholders were invited to express an interest and apply for an application pack.
- 6.2 In March 2011 we received completed applications from 18 people. We assessed each individual application and 'marked' in line with the process followed when we employ staff. Rather than shortlist a smaller number for interview we decided to invite all 18 applicants to an interview. We wanted to ensure that everyone was given an equal chance.
- 6.3 Interviews were conducted in April 2011 and this was followed by a collective group exercise where we held a 'meeting' to see how the individuals interacted with each other and how dynamically the group worked.
- 6.4 From this we selected eight initial individuals to go forward and become the Customer Senate. Those who were unsuccessful were encouraged to participate in other ways with us, as we did not want to lose their enthusiasm or indeed interest.
- 6.5 In June 2011 the 'shadow' Customer Senate was created (shadow in the sense that the group was in the development stage). In July the individuals went through the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) level three-scrutiny training. Also that month they were asked by the Assistant Director of Housing to have a look at estate services (caretaking) as their first project.
- 6.6 Over the summer of 2011 the group progressed with the estate services review and undertook further training whilst being supported by the Community Participation Team. During the same period one person dropped off the group as they moved away from the area. Eight became seven.
- 6.7 In November 2011 the group had its inaugural meeting and the customer senate was officially launched. A chair and vice-chair were elected. At the same time the group presented their findings on their review of estate services to the Assistant Director of Housing. The Assistant Director then presented the report in its entirety to the Neighbourhoods and Renewal Scrutiny Panel for consideration.



- 6.8 Not long after the group was also awarded their own 'meeting/office' facility at Fox Road in Langley (this was previously a facility that was used by the local Tenants and Residents Association (TRA) for the area but they had been successful in developing a community facility elsewhere on the estate (New Langley Community Association) so the facility at Fox Road was no longer used).
- 6.9 The group was also awarded an annual operational budget of up to £35,000 to cover any day to day running costs associated with the role of tenant scrutiny (see section 5 for further information).
- 6.10 Word of the approach to tenant co-regulation in Slough was getting around the housing sector. So in December 2011 the Customer Senate was invited with the Community Participation Manager to attend a seminar held by the Housing Quality Network (HQN) in central London on tenant scrutiny. The then-chair and vice-chair attended and with the Service Manager ran a workshop on best practice and what had worked well in Slough.
- 6.11 In 2012/13 the group focused on its biggest challenge to date, a review of the responsive repairs service. This proved to be a very significant project for the group. The report and recommendations were presented to the Assistant Director of Housing and Environment at the Customer Senate meeting in July 2013.
- 6.12 With both reviews (estate services and responsive repairs) the Customer Senate visited other landlords across the country, met with staff and tenants/leaseholders from these areas and spoke to them about what worked well and what did not work so well. This was in addition to accessing information from within SBC and talking to frontline staff and managers.
- 6.13 During 2012 the Chair stood down as he was undertaking a professional qualification in housing management so decided to focus on that. The vice-chair then stood in and took the group to their AGM in November 2012 where she was elected as chair and a new vice-chair was elected.
- 6.14 Vivianne Royal is the current chair of the group and Veronica Puglia is the group's vice-chair. In addition Morris Sless, Sue Peat, Christopher Hartigan and Vijay Gupta make up the six current members of the group.
- 6.15 Also during 2012 the group acted as the 'stage 3' complaints panel for housing service. When a stage 3 complaint was heard three members of the group came together to form the panel. The panel was (and still is) chaired by the vice-chair of the Customer Senate, Veronica Puglia. The group have heard about four stage 3 complaints since being developed.
- 6.16 To increase and maintain momentum a decision was taken in December 2012 to employ a housing specialist to work directly with the Customer Senate to build their capacity and help the group finalise their terms of reference, constitution and code of conduct, at the same time as providing the group with one on one training (on housing, governance, co-regulation, etc). The housing specialist (Huntcliff) continues to work with the group at this current time. Costs for this have been met from the existing involvement budget within Housing Services.

- 6.17 In March 2013 the Customer Senate held their first mini conference at The Centre in partnership with Housing Services. The event was to launch the Housing Service's service plan and to draw together the local offers for 2013/14 and report back on the offers from 2012/13. In addition the event was also a catalyst to encourage greater participation and involvement in the Area Panels. Around 70 tenants and leaseholders attended the event, which was very successful.
- 6.18 With the new requirements of the Housing Ombudsman in relation to complaints, designated persons and potentially a tenants panel, the Customer Senate have just embarked on a review of the complaints service within housing and it is envisaged that this will be completed by early 2014.
- 6.19 The group have regular features in Streets Ahead (Housing Service newsletter) and are featured on the SBC website. The group are in the process of developing their own website and this should be live in the coming months. This will also include the development of a new logo, which will be associated with the group.
- 6.20 There is currently an on-going recruitment drive to attract new members, a campaign has been developed and launched to bring new people on board. The group will also be developing a communication strategy to raise further awareness across the borough about the role of the group, their achievements and how by being involved others can make a real difference.
- 6.21 A road show is one of the options being discussed/considered and the members of the Senate are very pro-active in attending other community group events/meetings to inform and engage with as many people as possible.
- 6.22 The group have also actively been supporting the newly developed Area Panels for the three housing management patches. The Area Panels will identify service areas where they can work with SCS to undertake mini service reviews.
- 6.23 Training will be offered to Area Panel members such as mystery shopping, undertaking surveys, and how to conduct interviews with front line staff and managers about how services are delivered, what works well, what could be improved, etc.
- 6.24 The biggest challenge of all that the Customer Senate currently faces is attracting new tenants and leaseholders to join them. The role requires a very high level of commitment and dedication. Vivianne Royal is a shining example of this and is our foremost tenant activist within Slough. Other members of the group bring different qualities and skills that compliment each other and make co-regulation in Slough work and work well.
- 6.25 With the present and forthcoming recruitment drives the SCS aim is to enrol up to an additional six to nine new members to bring the panel up to between 12 and 15 representatives. The points covered in sections 6.20 to 6.23 will ensure that more tenants and leaseholders are aware of the SCS which will in turn attract more representatives to get actively involved on the group.
- 6.26 In addition, the SCS has three non-voting 'tenant' places on the Neighbourhood and Community Services Scrutiny Panel which are allocated by the Customer Senate. At present there is one place for a representative of the Customer Senate itself with the other two places allocated to a representative from the Leasehold Forums and

one from the general tenant activist population. Nominations for all three positions are put forward by the Customer Senate as required each year.

- 6.27 The Customer Senate and Area Panels clearly demonstrate how Slough is meeting the regulatory requirements in relation to co-regulation and tenant scrutiny in Slough. Other housing providers across the country are still struggling with this, some are even failing. Housing Services and the Customer Senate themselves still get enquiries from other local authorities and registered providers for information about what has been, and continues to be, achieved in the borough through tenant scrutiny and co-regulation.
- 6.28 The Customer Senate has undertaken two major service reviews in relation to two of the most important services to tenants, estate services (caretaking) and responsive repairs. The SCS review on the caretaking service is being covered under a different report this evening, in it you will see the impact that the review has made and the improvements that it has and will bring to the service overall. Two of the recommendations from the responsive repairs review are also being taken forward at this moment in time.
- 6.29 The Customer Senate also has a regulatory role themselves and oversees the regulation of recognised tenants and residents associations who receive annual funding from the council. They will ensure that any group who adopts the council's model constitution and funding agreement adhere to the requirements outlined within each document.
- 6.30 In terms of the operational budget allocation of up to £35,000 per year, the Customer Senate has been extremely prudent with this. During 2012 only expenses were claimed. This is also true of 2013 to date, but in addition some new furniture and equipment has been purchased for the meeting room in Fox Road. So the impact on the budget has been minimal.
- 6.31 Representatives of the Customer Senate are all volunteers. They receive no payment for their time and effort, only expenses are reimbursed. They have received specific training and have attended joint training with housing staff both internally within the organisation and externally in terms of attending seminars about key service areas/legislation, etc.
- 6.32 The Chair of SCS, Vivianne Royal has also recently been elected to the Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH) Tenant Panel for 2013 as a representative for the South East. This is a key achievement and something that puts Slough on the national map again in recognition of active tenant involvement.

## **7 Conclusion**

- 7.1 The principles of co-regulation and tenant scrutiny are here to stay. In response, Slough Borough Council has responded positively to these important regulatory and statutory changes and developed an approach to service delivery which formally incorporates tenants' views and which is transparently accountable to tenants.
- 7.2 Tenant scrutiny aims to give tenants more power in holding their landlords to account for their decisions, performance and conduct. It is based on the specific principle that the priorities and views of tenants should be at the heart of a housing organisation's framework for directing, monitoring, assessing and modifying its own

activities.

- 7.3 Where it works well, the benefits of tenant scrutiny include service improvements, efficiency savings, enhanced tenant satisfaction and staff confidence, tenant input into self-assessments; and a high level of challenge as to how landlords operate. Tenant scrutiny is intrinsically linked to the delivery of value for money services that meet local needs with transparency about how investment is made.
- 7.4 SCS makes good business sense for the Council because it ensures we are working towards the benefits outlined in 8.3 above. However, it is clear that a great deal of work is still needed to overcome local barriers to involvement across the Borough and to develop new opportunities that will, hopefully, be acceptable to all.
- 7.5 The new regulatory framework for tenant empowerment has been set, and tenants will need to be actively involved in setting priorities and evaluating performance for Housing Services, both for the council and across the borough as a whole.
- 7.6 This will involve a shift from effective resident consultation to effective resident empowerment. In some situations, this will represent a significant culture change and will present challenges.
- 7.7 The recently developed Area Panels are a good example of this change and will have a positive impact on working together with SCS to strengthen co-regulation across the borough.
- 7.8 The benefits to the council of having SCS as an informed, involved and empowered voice within the borough means a strengthening of the crucial link between service provider and service recipient; increased accountability, and an improvement in the quality of housing services for all tenants and leaseholders.

## 8 **Appendices Attached**

- A - Key legislation in relation to Tenant Participation/Involvement
- B - National Guidance On Co-Regulation

## 9 **Background Papers**

None

## TENANT LED CO-REGULATION IN SLOUGH – SLOUGH CUSTOMER SENATE (SCS)

### Report: Appendix A

#### 9.0 KEY LEGISLATION IN RELATION TO TENANT PARTICIPATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 9.1 A 'legal' right for council tenants to be 'consulted' on issues affecting the management of their homes was first introduced in the 1980 Housing Act and subsequent Tenants' Charter. Following on from this, several laws and codes of practice affecting tenant consultation and participation were introduced, details of which are outlined below.
- 9.2 Housing Act (1985) – Required councils and housing associations in England and Wales to inform and consult secure tenants (individually rather than collectively) on specific matters relating to the management of their homes. In particular, Section 104 of the Act required landlords give all tenants a written explanation of their conditions of tenancy, statutory rights, the landlord's repairing obligations and the arrangements for consultation. Section 105 of the Act placed a duty on councils to consult tenants on any changes in housing management and / or a change in the practice or policy of the authority, and are likely substantially to affect either its secure tenants as a whole or in a group. Section 27 strengthened existing procedures for the establishment of tenant management co-operatives.
- 9.3 Inquiry into Housing - chaired by HRH Duke of Edinburgh (1985) - Recommended that tenants' associations be recognised and supported and that a Tenant Participation Advisory Service for England be set up, to do similar work to the one set up in Scotland in 1981.
- 9.4 Housing & Planning Act (1986) – Amended parts of the Housing Act 1985, allowing councils to delegate housing management to other organisations. Section 16 of the Act gave the then Department of the Environments powers to provide grants to encourage tenant participation.
- 9.5 Housing Act and Tenants' Choice (1988) - Gave local authority tenants a right to choose an alternative landlord (Tenants' Choice) and set out procedures for a ballot of tenants affected by any transfer proposals.
- 9.6 Local Government & Housing Act (1989) - Introduced Performance Expectations (housing associations) and Performance Indicators (councils) which required landlords to demonstrate their accountability to tenants, as well as the Department of the Environment and the Housing Corporation.
- 9.7 Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act (1993) - Introduced the Right to Manage, giving council tenants a 'legal' right to set up tenant management organisations and take over the management of some or all housing management functions. Introduced Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) for housing management functions, with a requirement for councils to inform and consult tenants on CCT matters and provide information on CCT contracts.
- 9.8 Housing Act (1996) - Abolished Tenants' Choice.

- 9.9 Best Value (1997) – Introduced as a concept by government in 1997, this became a statutory requirement in the Local Government Act 1999, replacing Compulsory Competitive Tendering. Best Value requires local authorities and housing associations to review their service delivery, compare their performance with others and demonstrate that they have embraced the principles of fair competition in deciding who should deliver services. Consulting tenants is seen as essential to the Best Value process and there is a requirement that the views and expectations of local service users and residents are reflected in the outcome of service reviews. The Housing Inspectorate carries out regular inspections to ensure that landlords are meeting government requirements on Best Value.
- 9.10 Decent Homes Standard (2003) – A target for social housing providers to meet set standards of fitness and design for their homes by 2010. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister guidance required councils to carry out a stock option appraisal, appointing an independent tenants’ advisor to involve tenants in the process.
- 9.11 Housing Key Lines of Enquiry – KLOEs (2004)
- 9.12 National Framework for Tenant Participation Compacts (2005)
- 9.13 The foundations for a regulatory system that formally incorporates tenants’ views and concerns were set out in the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. The Act applied equally to local authorities and housing associations. The Act gave the then Tenant Services Authority (TSA) statutory objectives to empower tenants and to ensure they had the opportunity to shape services and standards.

A regulatory system was created which worked on a ‘co-regulatory’ basis where landlords, the regulator, and the tenants would work together to set, monitor, and enforce standards. Co-regulation aimed to move the focus of decision-making and performance management for housing services away from the regulator, and a one-size-fits-all approach, towards one focused on service users and locally defined needs and priorities. This is the essence of Localism.

- 9.14 The new regulatory standards, introduced in \*April 2012, retained the principle of co-regulation but stressed the following key elements as well:
- Responsibility for service delivery lies with the landlord, not the regulatory system nor the regulator.
  - Landlords are accountable to their tenants (not to the regulator) for customer facing, service delivery standards.
  - To hold their landlords to account and to shape service delivery, tenants need adequate information and effective influencing structures.
  - Landlords should make honest and robust self-assessments of their own performance: this can include drawing on external validation (e.g. peer review or benchmarking)
  - While the regulator has a role in setting clear outcome focused standards, these should be enhanced by more specific local offers agreed between landlords and their tenants.
  - There should be a clearer role for tenants in scrutinising performance.

*\*From April 2012 the regulation of social housing passed to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Regulation Committee.*

9.15 The Localism Act 2011 and the new regulatory standard for Resident Involvement and Empowerment both anticipate an enhanced role for tenants in relation to scrutiny. These regulatory and statutory changes has provided new challenges for the Council, as it seeks to have the right mechanisms, support, information and internal drivers in place for effective tenant scrutiny in the Borough.

This enhanced role for tenants requires substantial investment in skills and capacity building, matched with an increased focus on value for money. There is a general consensus that tenant involvement in scrutinising value for money should not just focus on financial efficiencies, but also on service delivery, investment, and quality.

### **THE BENEFITS OF TENANT PARTICIPATION**

The experiences of tenants and landlords who have developed tenant participation have shown that it benefits the housing service in many ways, including:

- Improvements in the way housing services are managed and delivered.
- Greater tenant satisfaction, because tenants will have been able to have a say in the service they receive.
- Improving housing management, because staff and councillors will be better informed.
- Giving tenants more choice or more power over their own homes and the environment in which they live.
- Helping councillors to do their job of representing others by opening up additional ways of communicating.
- Empowering community to take on issues beyond housing and involve different groups of people.

## TENANT LED CO-REGULATION IN SLOUGH – SLOUGH CUSTOMER SENATE (SCS)

### Report: Appendix B

#### 9.0 NATIONAL GUIDANCE ON CO-REGULATION

- 9.1 The foundations for a regulatory system, for both housing associations and local authorities that formally incorporated tenants' views and concerns were set in the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. Part of the context for the development of Tenant-Led Scrutiny in Slough is the new system for the regulation of social housing introduced in 2010 and since revised to take effect from April 2012.
- 9.2 From that date the regulation of social housing passed to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Regulation Committee. The new regulations require all registered social housing providers to meet relevant standards. Slough Borough Council, like other local authority landlords, will need to meet the consumer standards, which have been set in the following areas:
- Tenant involvement and empowerment
  - Home
  - Tenancy
  - Neighbourhood and community
- 9.3 The new approach to regulation is built around 'co-regulation'. For local authorities this means robust self-regulation by councillors, whilst enabling tenants to assess the performance of their housing provider.<sup>1</sup>
- 9.4 The regulator, HCA, may then intervene in cases where a breach, or potential breach of a consumer standard poses a risk of 'serious detriment' to tenants.
- 9.5 A cornerstone of co-regulation is that:
- Tenants should have the ability to scrutinise their provider's performance, identify areas for improvement and influence future delivery.
  - Providers will also need to continue to support tenants in developing their skills and capacity so that engagement and scrutiny are effective.
- 9.6 In order to meet the standard for involvement and empowerment, providers are expected to support:
- The formation and activities of tenant panels or equivalent groups and respond in a constructive and timely manner to them.

#### What is a Tenant Scrutiny Panel?

- 9.7 According to the Chartered Institute of Housing, this is:  
A group of tenants with the power to review information about their landlord's performance and make recommendations for improvement.



**SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Neighbourhood & Community Services Scrutiny Panel  
**DATE:** 5 September 2013  
**CONTACT OFFICER:** Karen Lewis, Local Estate Standards Officer  
**(For all enquiries)** (01753) 875436  
**WARD(S):** All  
**PORTFOLIO:** Cllr James Swindlehurst

**PART I**  
**FOR CONSIDERATION & COMMENT**

**THE ROLE OF CARETAKERS IN SUPPORTING NEIGHBOURHOODS**

1 **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to update the Panel on the provision of caretaking services to the Council's tenants and leaseholders and the future aims and aspirations for this service.

2 **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Panel is requested to comment on the information provided and plans for the future of this service.

3 **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

This report links with and contributes to the following priorities and cross cutting themes in the Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy:

Priorities:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Housing
- Safer Communities

Cross Cutting themes:

**Improving the image of the town** – The appearance of the town's estates and housing stock has a significant impact on the way that residents and visitors perceive Slough. The caretaking service contributes to the cleaning and maintenance of the external environment as well as shared internal areas, ensuring that estates and blocks of flats are safe, attractive places to live and visit and give a good impression of Slough.

4 **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)**

Not applicable.

5 **Other Implications**

(a) Financial

The caretaking service is paid for by residents that receive the service through service charges. A project to review the way that service charges are calculated will be commissioned when additional resource is made available through the planned restructure of the Housing Service. Options are also being explored to give residents the choice of opting out of aspects of the service by carrying out work themselves (for example cleaning of communal areas) or paying extra for more services or higher quality services.

The cost of the caretaking and building cleaning services for 2012/13 is set out in Appendix A.

(b) Risk Management

A full risk assessment will be carried out when assessing the options available to residents in relation to service charges and work that might be undertaken by residents themselves.

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigating action</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Legal	None	None
Property	The quality of the caretaking service will be closely monitored to ensure that properties are being well maintained and offer a safe, attractive environment for residents to live and visit.	Increasing the range of services provided by caretakers will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of maintaining estates and blocks.
Human Rights	None	None
Health and Safety	There is a risk to the health and safety of residents and visitors to the borough if problems are not identified and dealt with.	The provision of a high quality caretaking service will ensure that health and safety risks are quickly identified and removed.
Employment Issues	None	None
Equalities Issues	None	None
Community Support	None	Through the nature of their role, caretakers work on the borough's estates on a day to day basis which places them in an excellent position to identify areas of concern and ensure that support is directed to resolve any issues affecting

		communities.
Communications	None	None
Community Safety	None	Caretakers are developing a good understanding of the neighbourhoods and communities they work in and are able to identify areas of concern and ensure that action is taken to address any problems.
Financial	None	None
Timetable for delivery	None	None
Project Capacity	None	None
Other	None	None

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act or other legal implications in connection with this report.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

The completion of an EIA is not relevant to this report.

**6 Supporting Information**

- 6.1 The Housing Service currently employs 16 full-time caretakers, deployed across the three Area Housing Teams with responsibility for cleaning and maintaining 319 blocks of flats or 3,132 homes. This includes the provision of external cleaning services only to the borough's four tower blocks and nine de-designated (ex-sheltered) complexes. Internal cleaning of these blocks and complexes is undertaken as part of the guaranteed works specified in the Interserve contract.
- 6.2 Caretakers currently have the use of 12 vans which are stored in a secure parking area at The Centre. Caretakers are required to sign in and out of work by attending The Centre to sign in before starting work at 7:30 am and when finishing their working day at 3:30 pm. Their presence at The Centre each day enables their attendance to be monitored and communication to be shared. Recently caretakers have been supplied with Blackberry mobile phones to give them access to e-mails and therefore improve communication between them and officers responsible for managing the council's housing stock. The new phones also enable caretakers to take and submit photographs of communal repairs and issues such as fly tipping or vandalism.
- 6.3 Interserve is responsible for building (internal areas only) cleaning within the following blocks:

- Tower House
  - Ashbourne House
  - Broom House
  - Poplar House
- } Tower Blocks

- Allington Court
  - Brook House
  - Kennedy House
  - Garrick House
  - Redwood House
  - Apsley House
  - Armstrong House
  - Calstock House
  - Seymour Court
- } De-designated (ex-sheltered) complexes

6.4 The cost of these services is billed separately to the caretaking costs for each block. The cost of caretaking services to these blocks are applied to the external areas only as this service is still required. External cleaning services can include:

- Litter picking
- Clearing bin areas
- Cleaning car parking and garage areas
- Removing fly-tipped items to an agreed location for collection
- Sweeping pathways
- Clearing drying areas
- Inspecting areas to identify health and safety issues and report repairs

6.5 Interserve operatives clean the following communal facilities in the nine de-designated (ex-sheltered) complexes and the four tower blocks:

- Vacuuming corridors, communal areas and staircases
- Toilets and bathrooms
- Kitchens
- Lifts
- Guest rooms
- Emptying bins
- Glass in doors
- Mirrors
- Ironmongery
- Dusting

6.6 Within the majority of the 319 blocks the caretakers are responsible for carrying out the following activities in communal areas in blocks of flats:

- Mop floors using a wet mop and clean water
- Wipe down window ledges
- Report repairs in communal areas
- Remove minor graffiti and report extensive or offensive graffiti for removal
- Remove stains from walls and windows
- Remove cobwebs
- Litter-pick all communal areas (internal and external)
- Sweep car parking areas
- Carry out safety checks on communal areas
- Report any repairs
- Litter-pick and carry out visual safety checks in garage and play areas

- Keep all bin areas hazard free and tidy
- Clean, tidy and wash down entrance areas
- Arrange of bulk rubbish or fly-tipped items to be removed
- Make safe, where possible, any risks to residents' or visitors' health and safety
- Post-inspecting repairs to communal areas

6.7 The caretaking service is paid for by tenants and leaseholders who receive these services by way of service charges. Total service charge costs vary from £9.47 to £14.04 per week depending on the facilities and requirements of the particular block or complex:

- Communal lighting
- Internal and external cleaning
- Communal health and safety
- Communal aerials
- Maintenance of door entry systems and lifts etc
- Window cleaning
- Administration charges

6.8 Appendix A shows the current spend for 2012/13 for caretaking and Interserve's building cleaning services which show that:

- The cost to residents for the provision of caretaking services is £3.02 per week
- The cost to residents for the Interserve cleaning service is £3.95 per week

### **The Slough Customer Senate Review of the Caretaking Service**

6.9 In 2011 the Slough Customer Senate ('the Senate') carried out a review of the caretaking service. The Senate is the resident led body responsible for co-regulating and scrutinising the Housing Service. Following their comprehensive review (detailed in a separate report to the Panel by the Community Participation Manager) the Senate presented their findings and recommendations to the Assistant Director of Regeneration, Housing and Resources in November 2011.

6.10 The Senate's report (a summary of which is attached at Appendix B) led to a restructure of the caretaking team, increasing the number of caretakers from 12 to 16, including a 'floating' caretaker to cover staff absence. In response to the Senate's recommendations, consideration was given to recruiting a manager or foreman to specifically manage the service. The practicality of appointing Senior Caretakers is being evaluated as part of the restructure of the Housing Service.

6.11 The Senate have received updates on progress on responding to their recommendations on a six monthly basis.

### **Phased Improvements**

6.12 In response to the Senate's report the following action has been taken:

- A phased programme of improvement works has been developed to upgrade and improve communal areas to make them easier to clean and maintain. The five year programme will be piloted in August prior to full implementation in October 2013.

- Residents have been consulted on colour schemes and flooring for blocks of flats and feedback has been used to inform the improvement programme. Residents are now offered a choice of pre-determined colour schemes as part of the internal decoration programme.
- Area Panels have been established in each of the Area Housing patches to offer residents the opportunity to monitor local standards and service delivery. Area Panels also give residents the opportunity to raise local concerns and issues and to work with officers to develop and monitor solutions to the issues raised.
- New caretaking vans have been procured and work is underway to equip them with modern, effective cleaning equipment and materials. The new vans will also give caretakers access to a hot water supply for cleaning. Details of the specification and design of the new caretaking vans can be found at Appendix C.
- A training programme has been developed for caretakers who have now completed training in equalities, working at height and an overview of managing Anti-Social Behaviour. Caretakers who speak English as a second language have been given access to ESOL classes.
- Discussions are being held with Interserve to offer access to their 'Toolbox Talks' to up-skill caretakers to carry out minor repairs and accurately report more complex repairs in communal areas.
- Residents are actively encouraged to participate in the programme of regular estate inspections however, to date, only 28 residents have taken up this opportunity. Resident participation in estate inspection will continue to be monitored as part of the regular review of performance information as set out in the Performance Management Framework. Caretakers routinely take part in estate inspections.
- A comprehensive review of service charges is due to be carried out, however this project is dependent on the restructure of the Housing Service and the provision of additional resources for this extensive piece of work.
- A separate project will also be commissioned to research the options for fulfilling the regulatory requirement to offer a 'Tenant Cashback Scheme' to compensate tenants who carry out their own repairs. This project is also dependent on the restructure of the service and the provision of additional resources to undertake this work.
- Area Housing Managers have reviewed the provision of notice boards in blocks of flats.

6.13 The appearance and condition of Slough's neighbourhoods has a significant impact on residents' and visitors' perceptions. Caretakers deliver front line services providing a visible presence in neighbourhoods where they are able to build a good understanding of the communities and neighbourhoods in which they work. They are therefore able to respond to residents' queries and concerns and liaise with Neighbourhood Housing Officers and other council colleagues to deliver a fast, effective response when problems occur. In order to improve communication between officers and caretakers, the caretakers have recently been supplied with Blackberry mobile phones to give them access to e-mails and offer the ability to take and submit photographic evidence of repairs or fly-tipping etc. Caretakers are also able to check that repairs have been carried out and post-inspect the quality of any repairs or remedial work taken to address issues reported to contractors or partner agencies.

- 6.14 All caretakers have attended safeguarding training and are able to raise safeguarding alerts or refer residents to the Tenancy Sustainment Service where they identify a vulnerable resident or feel that there is cause for concern.
- 6.15 A recent satisfaction survey was undertaken with all 7,000 tenants and 1,200 leaseholders invited to complete a questionnaire relating to their home and their neighbourhood. The survey elicited a 26.5% response rate revealing that 77% of residents indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live. 74% of tenants are satisfied or very satisfied with the maintenance of their home. However, only 59% of residents felt that their rent and service charges offered Value for Money. It is proposed to carry out a further satisfaction survey next year to understand and improve on this feedback which also revealed that the majority of residents' responding to the survey and who wished to be engaged, preferred to be consulted by completing a survey.
- 6.16 In 2012/13 the service received just four complaints about the caretaking service, one of which related to a resident slipping on a wet floor and the remaining complaints were in relation to the quality and type of the flooring and internal decoration which made it hard for caretakers to clean. A five year, phased programme for improving internal decoration and flooring in blocks has been developed in response to this feedback. Residents were consulted on paint and flooring colours and the programme will now be piloted in August prior to being fully rolled out in October 2013.

There have been no complaints about the caretaking service so far this year.

## **7 Conclusion**

- 7.1 The Slough Customer Senate carried out a comprehensive review of the caretaking service in 2011. A number of actions have since been taken in response to the Senate's recommendations to improve and enhance the caretaking service. In recognition of the value that this front line service can bring to supporting neighbourhoods and creating and maintaining sustainable communities, a training programme is being implemented to further develop the skills and capability of caretakers to broaden their role and make full use of this resource to increase our understanding and management of the borough's neighbourhoods and communities.
- 7.2 The cost breakdown at Appendix B shows that the provision of the caretaking service is significantly lower than the cost of delivering internal cleaning through Interserve and making an additional charge for the provision of external caretaking services. However, it is not possible at this stage, to alter the Interserve contract to bring the cleaning service in-house as this is part of the guaranteed works within the contract.
- 7.3 Whilst it is accepted that a full review of service charges should be undertaken, this is an extensive piece of work and the resources are not available within the current structure. However, the additional resources required to undertake this work will be available to undertake this work. A second resident satisfaction survey will also be undertaken next year to determine residents' satisfaction with the changes introduced to the caretaking service and satisfaction that the service delivers value for money.

8 **Appendices Attached**

- A - Caretaking Costs and Interserve Building Cleaning 2012/13
- B - Slough Customer Senate Estate Services Review report Summary
- C - Caretaker van specification

9 **Background Papers**

- 1 - Updates to Senate's review of the caretaking service



## Caretaking and Interserve Building Cleaning Costs 2012/13

### Caretaking Costs

(Internal Areas excluding Blocks listed Below and all External Areas)

Total Caretaking Cost	Total Per Unit Per Annum	Total No of Units	Total per Unit Per Week
£492,552.66	£157.34	319* Blocks - 3,132 Units	£3.02

\* Plus external caretaking works to the blocks listed below.

### Interserve Cleaning Costs (Internal Areas Only) 2012/13

BLOCK	COST	# of units	p/a cost per unit
<b>Tower Blocks</b>			
Broom House	£6,954.64	42	£165.59
Poplar House	£6,954.64	42	£165.59
Ashbourne House	£10,431.95	60	£173.87
Tower House	£10,431.95	60	£173.87
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>£34,773.18</b>	<b>204</b>	
<b>De-Designated (ex-sheltered) Schemes</b>			
Allington Court	£5,563.71	39	£142.66
Brook House	£6,259.17	38	£164.72
Kennedy House	£6,259.17	36	£173.87
Garrick House	£5,563.71	35	£158.96
Redwood House	£5,563.71	21	£264.94
Apsley House	£4,172.78	47	£88.78
Armstrong House	£6,954.64	29	£239.82
Calstock House	£5,563.71	35	£158.96
Seymour Court	£5,563.71	25	£222.55
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>£51,464.31</b>	<b>305</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£86,237.49</b>	<b>509</b>	Average £205.82 per year  Average per Week £3.95 (+ caretaking costs for external areas)

## Review

### Slough Customer SENATE (SCS) for Slough Borough Council (SBC) on Expectations for the Future Repairs and Maintenance Service

#### Summary

With the current pressures on Local Authorities in relation to funding, the need more than ever to secure value for money (VFM) and the current repairs contract approaching the re-tendering phase in 2015. Slough Customer Senate (SCS) decided that the time was right to undertake a review of the current Repairs and Maintenance Service supplied at present by Interserve. Interserve has provided Slough with the current Repairs and Maintenance Service, since 2001 a long-term partnering contact totalling 15 years.

The information gathered, for this Review, is evidence that the present contract needs updating to keep it in-line with the practices in the present market. The involvement of Resident Scrutiny Panels is driving improvement, accountability and ensuring that services are accessible. Customer feedback is important and should drive improvements to the Repairs and Maintenance service, to provide a good quality housing service that meets the chosen needs of Tenants, Leaseholders and the wider community, including supporting the needs of vulnerable people. Organisations and Contractors should learn from customer complaints and use them to develop the service. The Tenant isn't the enemy. In recent years, there have been significant changes to the delivery of traditional Repairs and Maintenance services. Different contractor and partnering arrangements, advancements in new technologies and new procurement methods have all contributed to the transformation and improvement of repairs services delivered by many Landlords to their tenants.

Involving Tenants at the outset of the tendering of the new service is important to ensure that the delivery and performance of the service is fit for purpose and will deliver services that meet tenant's needs and expectations. A continuous monitoring, accountability and auditing of the new service is vital and penalties should be implemented if the new contract quality is not fulfilled. Tenants should be able to pick their own appointment date and time to suit which leads to less no-access that is beneficial to Tenant and has financial benefit to the Council/Contractor.

Keeping the Council's stock in a good state of repair enhances the mental and medical well-being of the local population. The Council and/or Contractors should take the lead to organise training exercises for Tenants to teach them how to carry out small DIY repairs and to give guidance and education so Tenants understand the connection between housing and health. Education of Tenants and the production of publications should be encouraged, to explain some simple ways to prevent and cure some of the main repair concerns: damp, condensation, ventilation, insulation and mould. There should be set guidelines to 'Who does What' between Council/ Contractor and Tenant so repairs caused by the Tenant can be re-charged.

Property Profiling is an efficient way of minimising unnecessary cyclical repairs/ decent homes – Need not Want Policy. Occupancy Profiling will highlight subletting, beds in sheds and over-occupancy alerting the authorities to potential fraud and health and welfare concerns.

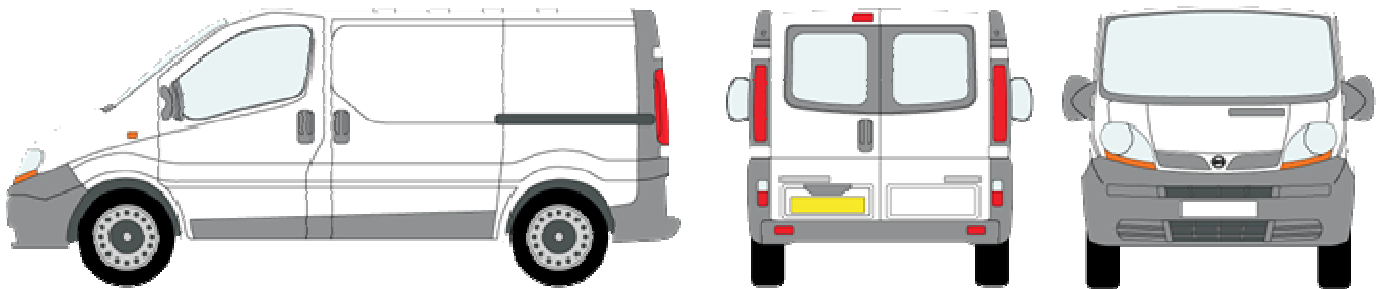
Realising how important front line staff and technicians are to the structure of a good service. Front Line Staff are the first point of contact a Tenant has with the service and it is important that key information is collected: name, address, contact details this should be automatically updated on the IT system. The Technician's role of being the eyes and ears of the community and reporting repairs and vulnerabilities is invaluable to the service and should be encouraged with appropriate training. Apprentices can be drawn from the local community in the progression of learning through structured courses, in local schools and colleges, or 'on the job' training. To encourage qualified Tradesmen/women into management roles or training.

Having efficient waste management within the Repairs and Maintenance service will put more money into the 'POT'. Waste covers a vast area :

- wasting time and expenditure
- sending letters to tenants confirming appointments
- satisfaction cards filled in by tenants at end of repair
- wrong collection of information on repair/address,
- no-access
- wrong materials
- technicians to leave job having to collect materials
- logistics – overstocking, out-of-date materials on shelves
- wasted man-management time, recycling of construction materials

To enhance all these findings the Service needs an individual IT System than doesn't cost vast amount of money with 'Add-Ons' and not be being 'Fit for Purpose'. It is important to have a system that 'talks' between Client and Contractor so all information can be transparent and accountable. The system can be tailored to all needs and information can be shared across the housing service. Every worry about transparency can be solved by a good simple IT system.

Slough Caretakers Vehicle	<b>Base Model:</b> Nissan	<b>Kit Weight:</b>	TBC	<b>1</b>
	<b>Variant:</b> Primastar	<b>Lead Time:</b>	TBC	
	<b>Drawing No:</b> TEV72713	<b>Payload:</b>	TBC	



**Electrics in Load Area**

2.5ltr Hot water system (2.5ltr of boiling water) with protective cover over the tap to stop accidental usage

This will be mounted to the locker next to the nearside loading door

**Linings & Floors**

9mm Non Slip Grey Wisa floor with non-slip sill strips on all entry points

3mm White Polypropylene Side Linings

**Additional**

Manual Fold out ramp

4no. Lashing Eyes on the floor to secure the cleaning equipment

**Racking Requirements**

To supply and fit racking as per CAD TEV72713

Racking to include a 1296mm high locker with shelf

Racking to fit along the vehicle bulkhead and along the offside of the vehicle

Tool board to be mounted on the offside of vehicle above the wheel arch

**Label & Safety Equipment**

On Board weighing system with digital read out display mounted conveniently in the cab

Note: Vehicles are required to have factory fitted bulkheads & nearside sliding door as standard.

Slough Caretakers  
Vehicle

**Base Model:** Nissan

**Kit** TBC

**Variant:** Primastar

**Weight:** TBC

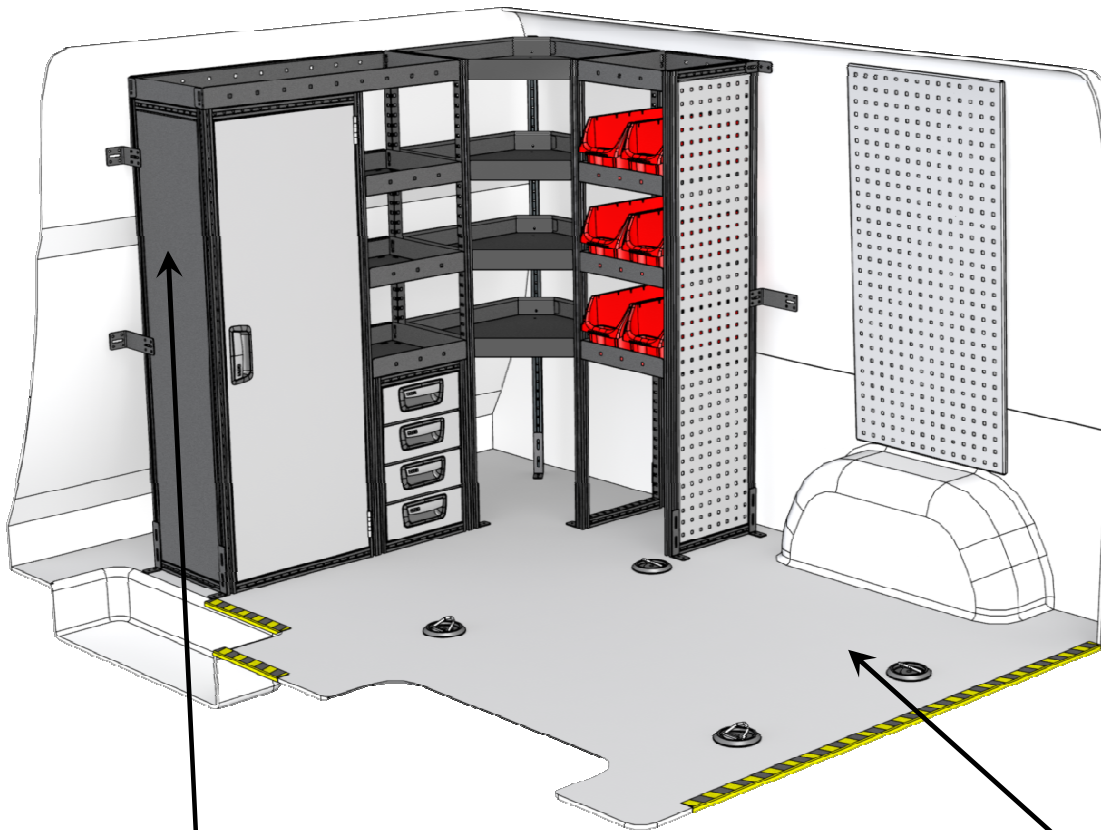
**Lead** TBC

**Time:** TBC

**Drawing No:** TEV72713

**Payload:** TBC

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**SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Neighbourhoods & Community Services Scrutiny Panel **DATE:** 5 September 2013

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Sarah Forsyth – Scrutiny Officer  
**(For all Enquiries)** (01753) 875657

**WARDS:** All

**PART I**

**TO NOTE**

**NEIGHBOURHOODS & COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL  
2013/14 WORK PROGRAMME**

1. **Purpose of Report**

1.1 For the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel to review its current work programme.

2. **Recommendations/Proposed Action**

2.1 That the Panel note the current work programme for the 2013/14 municipal year.

3. **Joint Slough Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

- **Housing**
- **Regeneration and Environment**
- **Safer Communities**

3.1 The Council's decision-making and the effective scrutiny of it underpins the delivery of all the Sustainable Community Strategy priorities. The Neighbourhoods & Community Services Scrutiny Panel, along with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and other Scrutiny Panels combine to meet the local authority's statutory requirement to provide public transparency and accountability, ensuring the best outcomes for the residents of Slough.

3.2 In particular, the NCS Panel specifically takes responsibility for ensuring transparency and accountability for Council services relating to housing, regeneration and environment, and safer communities.

#### 4. **Supporting Information**

##### Work Programme

- 4.1 The current work programme is based on the discussions of the Panel at its previous meetings, looking at requests for consideration of issues from officers and issues that have been brought to the attention of Members outside of the Panel's meetings.
- 4.2 The work programme is a flexible document which will be continually open to review throughout the municipal year.

#### 5. **Conclusion**

- 5.1 This report is intended to provide the Panel with the opportunity to review its upcoming work programme and make any amendments it feels are required.

#### 6. **Appendices Attached**

A - Work Programme for 2013/14 Municipal Year

#### 7. **Background Papers**

None.



**NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL**  
**WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14**

Meeting Date
<b>30 October (tbc)</b>
Extraordinary Meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heathrow Airport Expansion: evidence gathering</li> </ul>
<b>6 November 2013</b>
<p><b>Scrutiny Items</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management of Houses of Multiple Occupancy</li> <li>• Management and Prevention of rent arrears/voids/damage to housing stock</li> <li>• Older People's Housing Offer</li> </ul>
<b>8 January 2014</b>
<p><b>Scrutiny Items</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of Benefits Changes on Housing – management of discretionary housing payments/effectiveness of downsizing process</li> <li>• Management of service charges for Council tenants and business rates</li> </ul>

<b>27 February 2014</b>	
<p><b>Scrutiny Items</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of work of the Community Safety Partnership</li> <li>• Domestic Violence</li> <li>• Prostitution</li> </ul>	<p>Crime and Disorder Committee</p>
<b>2 April 2014</b>	
<p><b>Scrutiny Items</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of Neighbourhood Action Groups</li> </ul>	

Currently Un-programmed:

- Traffic Congestion: report back from working group
- Impact of London Boroughs policies on housing

**MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE RECORD**  
**NEIGHBOURHOODS & COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL 2013-14**

COUNCILLOR	MEETING DATES						
	19/06/2013	05/09/2013	06/11/2013	08/01/2014	27/02/2014	02/04/2014	
Dar	P						
Dhillon	Ab						
Malik	P						
M Mann	P						
Minhas	P						
Plenty	P						
Shah	P						
Sohal	P						
Wright	P						

P = Present for whole meeting  
 Ap = Apologies given

P\* = Present for part of meeting  
 Ab = Absent; no apologies given

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