

Slough Borough Council

Housing Allocation Scheme

2013 - 2018

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, Housing Associations, 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, will make the best use of the scarce resource of social housing, allocating it to those qualifying applicants 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

Introduction

Under the Housing Act 1996 Part 6 all local housing authorities are required to have a Housing Allocation Scheme which governs how social housing is allocated to those who are eligible and what priorities different applicants have. 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 2013/14 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.

In preparing the Housing Allocation Scheme there has been regard to 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

The Scheme has also been prepared with regard to the Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Housing Authorities in England (2012)

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

1. Provide housing to those in greatest need and preventing the risk of homelessness.
2. Reward responsible behaviour
3. Encourage mixed, strong and sustainable communities
4. Promote choice and control for applicants
5. Make the most effective use of the limited social housing stock in the borough
6. Make social housing a tenure of choice for applicants who;
 - a. make a community contribution
 - b. take a personal responsibility for their actions and behaviour
 - c. can demonstrate a proven track record to manage their tenancy or home

Housing context in Slough

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 other Housing Associations, 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 2013, 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 it does seek to provide housing where possible. The council has worked to deliver additional homes on former garage sites through partnerships with Housing Associations. 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 qualifying applicants 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 Housing Associations) 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.

Changes to admission to the Housing Register

The Localism Act 2011 has given local housing authorities the option to determine who does, and who does not qualify for an allocation of housing. This will enable the Council to make decisions on who will qualify for the Scheme. 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 time frame.

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.

Lettings Plan

The council currently allocates to around four hundred properties each year across council and Housing Association 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.

The Council through evidence from previous lettings and the priority qualifying groups from the Scheme will allocate a quota of properties to each band in the Allocations Scheme. Each band will have a variety of properties included so that the priority applicants in that band will eventually receive an offer of a home.

The Council will regularly review that quota of properties available to each band and will publish the Lettings Plan Annually

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 3¹/₂ times their annual income.

| Slough residential property sales figures based on period January – March 2012 (land registry) | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Type | Detached | Flat | Semi | Terraced |
| Price | £334,111 | £137,227 | £244,080 | £198,563 |
| N° sold in period | 25 | 75 | 61 | 108 |
| Change in last year | -1.3% | 2.3% | 3.2% | 1.1% |
| Change in last quarter | -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.

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 reduction'. 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 responsibility 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.

Housing Options

Regardless of whether an applicant and their household qualify to join the Housing Register, the council will provide housing options advice and support for all applicants. This advice is also available to all residents in Slough.

The Housing Register

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

Slough Borough Council will operate a managed Housing Register and will accept onto the Housing Register only those applicants:

- who meet **eligibility** criteria and

- who **qualify** by meeting the **Reasonable Preference** criteria, *and*
- do not fall into an **ineligible non-qualifying category**.

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 Preference will be awarded to applicants who meet the criteria set out within this scheme.

Within bands, housing will be allocated based upon the length of time an applicant has been on the register. For qualifying applicants, it is the length of time in your relevant band that is relevant.

Our Policy on Choice

1. When making an application to join the Housing Register and if they are qualifying persons, applicants and the members of their household will be making an application to be housed:
 - a. Anywhere within the borough of Slough.
 - b. In any tenure or tenancy type which meets their needs, whether council managed accommodation or Housing Association.
 - c. In any size and type of property which meets the needs of the qualifying applicant and their household, as determined in this Allocation Scheme.

All eligible and qualifying applicants will be placed on the Register but when the Council comes to decide what size or type of property the applicant is to be considered for it will take account of whether other members of the applicant's household are eligible or qualifying persons. The Council will also take into account a number of factors in making a decision on allocation.

(Please see – 'How This Scheme Works')

Even if the applicant's household includes only eligible and qualifying members, 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, when determining what size or type of accommodation the applicant will be considered for in this Scheme.

In the case of large households which may therefore not be accommodated together under this Scheme the council may discuss with the applicant how best the other members of the household may obtain accommodation, whether from the council or otherwise.

Eligibility

Eligibility to join the Housing Register is determined nationally by law. The categories that are not eligible are set out in the Housing Act 1996 Part 6 section 160ZA (as amended) and in regulations made under that section. Applicants covered by those categories below will not be registered.

Section 160ZA reads:

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).
- (4) The Secretary of State may by regulations prescribe other classes of persons from abroad who are ineligible to be allocated housing accommodation by local housing authorities in England.

Persons who fall into these categories will not be considered by the Council to be part of the household of an applicant, even if the applicant is themselves eligible.

If a person who has been admitted to the Register ceases to be eligible, applying the above criteria, he or she will be removed from the Register.

Qualification: Reasonable Preference

Eligible applicants on the Register will be those who (either by themselves or by the inclusion of a household member on their application form) fall within the persons accorded a statutory reasonable preference category. For these purposes, the Council will apply the national categories of Reasonable Preference set out in the legislation. Those categories are:

(see Housing Act 1996, 166A (3))

- (a) people who are homeless (within the meaning of Housing Act 1996 Part 7);
- (b) people who are owed a duty by any local housing authority under Housing Act 1996 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).

If a person who has been admitted to the Register ceases to qualify, applying the above criteria, he or she will be removed from the Register.

Qualification: other requirements

Even if an applicant is eligible and would have satisfied the Reasonable Preference criteria, they will not be admitted to the Housing Register (and therefore will not qualify for an allocation) if they come within one of the following class of person which the Council has decided are classes of non-qualifying persons for the purposes of this Scheme.

The following 1 – 13 are the classes that the Council has adopted as non qualifying persons. Any person(s) who falls within one of those classes cannot join the Register and will be **removed** if they enter that class.

1. Applicants, or those who reasonably be expected to reside as part of their household, who have been convicted of housing or welfare benefits related fraud, where that conviction is unspent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Any person caught by this may re-apply once this conviction is spent
2. Applicant(s) who have a joint gross household income exceeding £55,000
3. Applicants or members of their household that have over £20,000 in savings, investments or equity
4. Applicants or members of their household who have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour which makes them unsuitable to be a tenant. This includes but is not limited to:
 - a. persistent failure to pay rent and/or service charges;
 - b. anti social behaviour perpetrated by the applicant or a member of his or her household which has caused a nuisance;
 - c. illegal or nuisance behaviour that has required Police or legal intervention;
 - d. threats of and/or actual violence to any persons or members of their household

- e. racial harassment or hate crime
 - f. obtaining a tenancy by deception and/or attempting to obtain a tenancy by fraud or deception.
5. Applicants who have been made two suitable offers by Slough Borough Council of a secure (or introductory), or assured tenancy anywhere within the borough of Slough, who have failed to accept the offer. Applicants and the members of their household who have failed to accept a suitable and reasonable offer will be cancelled from the Register for a period of no less than 24 months
 6. Applicants, or members of their household, that have any housing related debt, including rent arrears or mortgage arrears, in respect of 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.) The Council will consider a period of up to 10 years prior to applying to the Register and consideration will be given to applicants with mitigating circumstances
 7. 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.
 8. In the case of private accommodation, references may be sought from previous landlords/mortgage companies to assess applicants tenant's record.
 9. Applicants who have continuously lived in Slough for less than **five years** (this does not apply to Armed Forces applicants. For applicants placed out of borough by the Council time spent out of borough will contribute to the accumulation of five years).
 10. Applicants who reside in Slough, but have been placed in
 - a. statutory temporary accommodation by another Council,
 - b. residential accommodation by another Council or Health provider,
 - c. other temporary accommodation, or assured short hold accommodation by another Council or Housing Association or agents acting on their behalf
 - d. institutional accommodation, by any other local authority, housing provider, health service or specialist provider.
 - e. who have refused a suitable offer of an Assured Short hold Tenancy made through the Council's Social Lettings Agency or Rent Deposit Scheme.
 11. Any applicant who has committed acts of violence and/or aggression against any employee of 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.

12. Applicants or any members of their household who have previously purchased their home through Right to Buy (in the last 10 years) will also not be allowed to join the Register

13. An applicant who has a person in one of the above classes included in his or her application

Additional Preference

The Scheme allows the Council to give additional preference to particular descriptions of people who are already within the reasonable preference categories. Taking into account local priorities and circumstances the Council have identified the following descriptions of people to give additional preference.

1. Applicants making a community contribution as defined below;

A. Working Households

Applicants where at least one adult household member is in employment. For the purposes of this Allocations Scheme 'employment' means having a full time contract, full time as a temporary member of staff or being self-employed. Employment must be in the UK. Applicants will only qualify if the worker has been employed for the last 12 months. Verification will be sought at point of application to join the Register as well as at the 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 employer's headed paper in order to qualify.

B. Recognised Training and Education

This may be achieved by attending higher or further education or by accessing a 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 by the employer and may be undertaken in conjunction with volunteering, as long as the volunteering contributes to the Council's Priorities of Safer Communities, Regeneration and Environment, Housing, Health and Wellbeing, 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)

C. **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 housing association. It is essential the volunteering directly contributes to the well being of **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.

2. Applicants leaving care (children), single, over the age of 18.
3. Single applicants leaving residential care
4. Applicants requiring move on accommodation from Young People's Accommodation
5. Applicants who have been approved by Slough Borough Council to foster or adopt and have an existing track record of fostering or adopting for not less than 2 years
6. Armed forces applicants with urgent housing needs who fall within the criteria for additional preference set out in section 166A(3) of the Housing Act 1996 as amended. This is applicable to a person who:

- a. is serving in the regular forces and is suffering from serious a injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service;
 - b. formerly served in the regular armed forces
 - c. 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 the spouse or civil partner who has served in the regular forces; and whose death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service; or
 - d. 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 the person's service.
7. Households who have actively and positively engaged with the Council's Family First programme and have shown real progression within the programme.
8. Applicants who are under occupying a secure or assured tenancy who require a move to smaller accommodation

Banding

Applicants on the Housing Register will be placed into one of three Bands.

Which is the appropriate Band will be decided by council officers and will depend upon:

- (1) Whether the need for accommodation is "urgent"
- (2) Whether the applicant (or member of his/her household) Is in an Additional Preference category
- (3) Whether the applicant (or member of his/her household) is in a Community Contribution category

The three Bands are:

| | |
|--------|--|
| Band A | Urgent requirement to move |
| Band B | Requirement to move due to Reasonable Preference AND Additional Preference |
| Band C | Requirement to move due to Reasonable Preference |

Older Persons Accommodation

In order to qualify for older persons accommodation all applicants must meet the qualifying criteria as set out in the Scheme.

In addition the applicant(s) must meet the following qualifying criteria;

1. Be a minimum age of 50

Slough Tenants Wishing to Move

Any existing tenant wishing to move must fulfil the qualifying criteria as set out in this scheme

In the first instance all tenants must approach their Housing Officer if they wish to be transferred and will be advised of the options available to them to transfer.

If tenants meet the criteria as set out in 'How the Scheme Works' of this Policy, then they will join the Housing Register and be banded accordingly to facilitate a transfer. This process will be similar for Housing Association assured tenants who wish to transfer.

Local Lettings Plans

New affordable and social housing developments, (both housing association and Council and through an agreed partnering arrangement) and some existing estates or communities, may be subject to a local lettings policy adopted by the Council.

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.

For new affordable and social housing developments, local lettings policies will dictate that a percentage of allocations will be made to applicants who meet the qualifying criteria as set out in this Scheme seeking transfers(and on the Housing Register) who have demonstrated the ability to maintain a satisfactory tenancy in both financial and conduct terms.

Priority will also be given in a local lettings policy to households opting to downsize.

Section 166A(6)(b) of the Housing Act 1996 enables local housing authorities to allocate a particular accommodation to people of a 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 applicable to those properties.

Allocating Properties

Properties becoming available for allocation under this Scheme will be treated as available to letting to qualifying applicants in a particular band or bands. Such a property will be allocated to the applicant who has waited longest in the relevant band, unless there are exceptional circumstances

For example, 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 of adapted properties. In these or similar circumstances a senior officer will need to agree that the applicant may be allocated the property ahead of applicants who have waited longer.

The council will produce an Annual Lettings Plan to show the projected allocations of properties by bedroom size and area to particular Bands.

Size, Type and Suitability of housing offers

Those accepted onto the Housing Register will be given two offers of suitable accommodation

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 relevant requirements. 'Size' will be calculated using the guidelines as defined in **Appendix A.**

Operation of this scheme and Applications

'**How the Scheme Works**' will outline all the procedural elements for the Scheme

Following receipt and processing of an application, applicants will be informed in writing as to whether or not:

- (1) they have met the Eligibility criteria
- (2) they have met the Reasonable Preference criteria
- (3) they are in a Non-Qualifying class
- (4) they have been registered on the Housing Register (if so, with the date of registration)
- (5) any Additional Preference has been awarded;
- (6) any Community Contribution Preference has been awarded

and which Band (if any) their application has been placed into.

If any of these matters are decided against the applicant's interests, the written notice will give reasons for the council's decision.

If requested by applicants, the council will provide in writing:

(1) information relating to decisions taken based upon the facts of the case which determine whether or not to allocate particular housing or (2) information providing, 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 likely to have to await is difficult to predict due to the unpredictable availability of suitable properties and varying volume of applications.

Requesting a review

1. An applicant may request a review of the decision:
 - a. whether or not the offer made to them is suitable and reasonable
 - b. that they are ineligible to join the Housing Register for an allocation due to them being subject to immigration control (160ZA (2))
 - c. that they are not a person qualifying to join the Housing Register
 - d. that any particular facts are or are not going to be taken into account in considering whether to allocate them accommodation.
2. The applicant shall be notified in writing of the decision of the review, and the grounds for that decision.
3. An applicant found not be eligible or to be non-qualifying may make a fresh application if they feel that they should be treated as an eligible or qualifying applicant.

The categories of decisions made by the Council which applicants can request a review are set out with a review procedure as explained in 'How the Scheme Works'

Fraud Prevention

Housing Act 1996 Section 171 makes it an offence for anyone seeking assistance from a housing authority under Part 6 of the 1996 Act to:

- Knowingly or recklessly give false information, or
- Knowingly withhold information which the housing authority has reasonably required the applicant to give.

Ground 5 in Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by section 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.

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 applicant(s) who have either been allocated a home or applied for a home by using false or fraudulent information.

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 as set out above will lead to the necessary disciplinary actions being taken as set out in the Council's Governance and Policies.

APPENDIX A: SIZE CRITERIA

The following is a **guide only**

The property size that will be allocated for a particular household will be assessed according to the following guidelines and will be based only on the actual household composition. The council uses the Government's bedroom standard for housing benefit

Applicants are entitled to a bedroom each for the following groups:

- Single or co-habiting couple.
- Any child over the age of 16 years.
- Any two children of the same sex under the age of 16 years.
- Any two children any sex aged under 10.