

COMMITTEE

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT

DATE

16th February 2010

CORPORATE DIRECTOR

PETE LEONARD

TITLE OF REPORT

**DEFERMENT OF COUNCIL HOUSING
APPLICATIONS FOLLOWING REFUSALS
OF OFFERS**

REPORT NUMBER:

H & E 09/058

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Committee agreed at its meeting on the 9th June 2009 to retain a policy of deferring housing applicants for a period of 6 months where a homeseeker/mover has refused a second offer of housing for any inappropriate reason, irrespective of the type of housing offered. This report provides members with an update on this policy.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members of the Committee note the information contained in this report and retain the deferment policy and the refusal deferment reasons as listed in Appendix A to this report

3. SERVICE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 3.1 This report has been prepared with regard to linking to the Council policy, Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward Looking to speed up letting and repairs in Council housing. Homeseeker/mover applicants whose housing application is deferred as a result of the unreasonable refusal of 2 offers of housing will not be made a further offer until the expiry of the 6 months suspension. Applicants do however have the right of appeal against any decision to defer their application.
- 3.2 The Council's Single Outcome Agreement is contained within the Community Plan update 2008 and the Single Outcome Agreement 2008/11. This links national outcomes with local outcomes and priorities that in turn support the administrations policy document. Those specifically related (either directly or indirectly) to the current letting arrangements are:
- a. Improve the quality of life in our most deprived areas.
 - b. All unintentionally homeless households will be entitled to settled accommodation.

4. 1 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the report,
- 4.2 There are no direct personnel implications arising from the report
- 4.3 There are no direct equipment implications arising from the report
- 4.4 There are no direct Health and Safety implications arising from the report.
- 4.5 There are no direct resource implications arising from the report.
- 4.6 There are no direct property implications arising from the report

Main considerations.

At the Policy and Strategy committee of 9th June 2009 members resolved to continue with the deferment policy and requested an update report in six months.

We currently defer for a period of six months, homeseeker/mover applicants who unreasonably refuse two offers of accommodation, these refusals are deemed to unreasonable if they comply with the reasons set out in appendix A

The deferment policy is intended to encourage applicants to be clear about their choices and expectations in relation to the properties available. Staff making offers, obtain feedback from applicants to ensure future offers meet the applicant's requirements. The motivation of a future deferment where an applicant refuses their first offer has encouraged applicants to be clear about where they want to live.

They can therefore change their areas and house types to avoid any future deferment. The change in policy to defer applicants after 2 unreasonable refusals is having the desired impact in reducing refusal rates. When 2 unreasonable refusals are recorded against an application the computer system automatically defers the application for 6 months.

The impact of this policy was monitored over a 6 month period which revealed that a total of 2287 offers of housing were made and of these offers 911 (39.8%) were refused with 395 (43%) being deemed as unreasonable.

Deferment for unreasonable refusals 1st May to 31st October 2009

	Offers	Refusals	% Refusals	Unreasonable Refusals	% Unreasonable Refusals
May	337	151	44.8	71	47.0
June	412	177	42.3	56	31.6
July	405	182	44.9	84	46.1
August	362	131	36.2	64	48.8
September	343	116	33.8	52	44.8
October	378	154	40.7	68	44.2
TOTALS	2287	911	39.8	395	43.4

Figures taken from VW5 spreadsheet
Commserve/admin/committee formats/new report tem~~p~~late

Currently 30 applicants have been deferred up to the end of October for two unreasonable refusals. The introduction of the current deferment policy is having a positive impact on the percentage of refusals compared to the 2006/7 baseline refusals rates which were over 60%.

We are aware that the Housing Regulator is critical of landlords who have large numbers of applicants deferred on their housing lists so we aim to strike a balance between imposing deferments where reasonable and allowing applicants sufficient choice and flexibility in their efforts to obtain housing suitable to their needs.

5. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 5.1 A previous report which went before Policy & Strategy Committee on the 9th June 2009.

6. AUTHORISED SIGNATURE

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7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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Appendix A

Offer refusal reasons which would count towards deferment of an application.

Not interested in area
Not interested in block
Area too hilly
Not interested in street
Not interested in house type for the area
Central heating type
Now wants a garden
No longer wants a garden
No longer interested in heating type
Not interested in house type for any area
Wants different size of property
Arrears

Appendix B

Offer refusal reasons which would not count towards deferment of an application.

Wants application cancelled
Change of Address
Change of Circumstances
Wants application deferred
Doesn't want to move at present for financial reasons
Gone away
Doesn't want to move at present for health reasons
Location
No contact at accompanied viewing
No contact at key stage
Does not want to move at present
No response
Personal
Pets
Poor condition of property
Steps
Too small
Floor level
Keys not available
Warden charge