

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL

CABINET

19 APRIL 2007

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

PORTFOLIO HOLDER - SOCIAL INCLUSION AND HOUSING

CHOICE BASED LETTINGS SCHEME

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider a proposed Choice Based Lettings Scheme for Southern Staffordshire and North Warwickshire, following a successful bid for additional resources for the development and implementation of the scheme from The Department for Communities and Local Government.
- 1.2 To consider the arrangements for consultation in respect of the proposed scheme with service users and other stakeholders.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Council confirm their participation in the development and implementation of a Choice Based Lettings Scheme for Southern Staffordshire and North Warwickshire, following the successful bid for additional resources from the Department for Communities and Local Government.
- 2.2 That the draft proposed Choice Based Lettings Scheme as set out in the draft proposed Allocations Policy Statement (attached as Annex 1) and the draft "Somewhere to Live" booklet for housing applicants (attached as Annex 2) is agreed for a 12 week period of written consultation with service users and other stakeholders.
- 2.3 That the views of the Social Inclusion and Housing Select Committee are requested on the proposed Choice Based Lettings Scheme.
- 2.4 That the results of the consultation exercise and the views of the Social Inclusion and Housing Select Committee are reported to a future Cabinet meeting, together with a final draft of the proposed Choice Based Scheme which reflects the outcomes of the consultation exercise as appropriate.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 Following a successful bid for additional resources from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to assist with the development of a Choice Based Lettings Scheme for Southern Staffordshire and North Warwickshire, a draft proposed Choice Based Lettings Scheme has been formulated for consultation with service users and other stakeholders.
- 3.2 Details of the proposed scheme (which has been formulated in accordance with the allocations framework agreed by Cabinet on 21 September 2006) are set out in the draft proposed

Allocations Policy Statement (attached as Annex 1) and the draft "Somewhere To Live" booklet for housing applicants attached as Annex 2.

- 3.3 Priority regarding offers of accommodation for 95% of vacant properties would be given to applicants who, either live in the Cannock Chase District or who work in the District and have at least two hours travelling time to work, from their existing home.
- 3.4 However, 5% of vacant properties would be allocated to other households who have a local connection with the Cannock Chase area. This would be defined as having immediate family in the Cannock Chase District Council area, the need to care for or receive care from someone living in the District or having previously lived in the District for a period of at least two years. Priority in respect of these 5% of vacancies would be given to nominations from other partner organisations within the Southern Staffordshire and North Warwickshire Choice Based Lettings Scheme, subject to reciprocal agreement from other partners in the scheme.
- 3.5 In order to ensure that the severity of an household's housing needs are taken into account, applications would be assessed against a number of criteria in order that they could be placed in one of four priority bands. The priority with each band would be determined by the date of application.
- 3.6 Vacant properties would then be allocated in accordance with a quota system in relation to each priority band, which would be detrimental annually in accordance with:-
- (a) The Council's allocations scheme policy objectives.
 - (b) The number of applicants on the Housing Register within each priority band.
- 3.7 The initial target quota for the first year of operation will be determined, following the required consultation exercise (as detailed in paragraph 3.12) and a preliminary analysis of the number of applicants on the Housing Register who would be placed in each priority band. However, for the purpose of the consultation exercise, it is suggested that the initial quotas are as follows:-

<u>Priority Band</u>	<u>% of vacancies</u>
Band One	50%
Band Two	30%
Band Three	15%
Band Four	5%

- 3.8 Restrictions would however, be placed on the type of accommodation which could be offered to applicants, to ensure that households are allocated a property which is suitable to their needs and "best use" is made of the housing stock. For example, under the proposed scheme only families with children would be eligible for houses, whilst only applicants aged over 60 would be eligible for sheltered accommodation.
- 3.9 Vacant properties would be advertised through a range of mechanisms (including the local press, the website and local offices), with applicants in a relevant band or bands being invited "to bid" for the vacant property. The property would then be allocated to the "bidder" with the highest priority within the band in which the property was advertised. Applicants would therefore be aware of all vacant properties and would be able to "bid" for any dwelling (in which they would like to live), for which they were eligible in terms of property type and banding.

- 3.10 Regular feedback would be given on actual lettings through the local press, when the “next round” of properties was advertised.
- 3.11 Before adopting a new allocations scheme the Council is required in accordance with the Housing Act 1996 to consult with Registered Social Landlords with whom they have nomination rights. In addition, the DCLG recommend that the Council also submit a wide range of statutory and voluntary organisations, together with service users.
- 3.12 It is therefore proposed to undertake a written consultation exercise with Registered Social Landlords, a range of statutory and voluntary organisations and service users, on the proposed Choice Based Lettings Scheme, over a 12 week consultation period. Where appropriate “consultation meetings” will also be held with key stakeholders.
- 3.13 In addition, it is suggested that the views of the Social Inclusion and Housing Select Committee are also sought on the proposed scheme.
- 3.14 The results of the consultation exercise, together with the views of the Social Inclusion and Housing Select Committee will be reported to a future Cabinet meeting, with a revised allocations scheme, which where possible reflects the outcomes of the consultation exercise.

REPORT INDEX

Background	Section 1
The Principles of Choice Based Lettings Schemes	Section 2
The Proposed Choice Based Lettings Scheme	Section 3
Access to the Housing Register	Section 4
Priority Bands	Section 5
Type of Accommodation to be Offered	Section 6
Consultation Requirements	Section 7
Implementation	Section 8
Contributions to CHASE	Section 9
Crime Prevention Implications	Section 10
Human Rights Act Implications	Section 11
Data Protection Act Implications	Section 12
Risk Management Implications	Section 13
Legal Implications	Section 14
Financial Implications	Section 15
Human Resource Implications	Section 16
Conclusions	Section 17
Background Papers	
Annexes	

Section 1

1. **Background**

- 1.1 Cabinet on 21 September, 2006 considered a report on the introduction of a Choice Based Lettings Scheme for the allocation of accommodation in order to meet the Governments requirement that all local authorities operate such a scheme by 2010.
- 1.2 It was reported that the Government are encouraging the formulation of Choice Based Lettings Schemes on a regional or sub-regional basis and had made additional resources available to assist with the development and implementation of such schemes.
- 1.3 Cabinet agreed inter alia:-
- (a) To participate in the development of a Choice Based Lettings Scheme for Southern Staffordshire and North Warwickshire*.
 - (b) An allocations framework for the scheme.
 - (c) The submission of a bid with other partner organisations to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for additional resources to assist with the development and implementation of the scheme.
 - (d) To the further development of the proposed scheme and the receipt of a further report when the results of the bid to the DCLG were known.

* Note: The Choice Based Lettings Scheme will cover the following local authority areas:-

Lichfield, Tamworth, North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth, East Staffordshire, South Staffordshire and Cannock Chase.

- 1.4 The DCLG have now informed the "partnership" that its bid has been successful and as a result a grant of £109,769 is available to meet 60% of certain eligible costs regarding the development and implementation of a Choice Based Lettings Scheme for Southern Staffordshire and North Warwickshire, subject to the remaining 40% of the costs being met by the partner authorities. The DCLG are not, however, prepared to contribute towards the on-going costs of operating a Choice Based Lettings Scheme and these have to be met in full by the partner organisations.
- 1.5 The "partnership" now require confirmation of the Council's participation in the Choice Based Lettings Scheme for Southern Staffordshire and North Warwickshire in order that the DCLG grant can be "drawn down" and allocated.
- 1.6 As a result the proposed allocations framework agreed by Cabinet on 21 September has been further developed and details of a proposed scheme for consultation is set out in this report.

Section 2

2. **The Principles of a Choice Based Lettings Scheme**

- 2.1 Choice Based Lettings Schemes give households a choice and a stake in where they live. This ultimately leads to more satisfied tenants, who stay longer, pay their rent and look after their

homes, which results in more “stable, viable and inclusive communities”. The introduction of such a scheme does not however, increase the supply of social housing but changes the way it is allocated.

- 2.2 In order to meet housing need and ensure that the severity of the housing needs of households are taken into account, applications are assessed against predetermined criteria within a published Allocations Scheme. Applicants are then placed into one of a number of bands (usually restricted to three or four) which determine an applicant’s priority with the priority within each band being determined by the date of application. Vacant properties are subsequently allocated in accordance with a quota system in relation to each priority band.
- 2.3 Restrictions are however, placed on the type of accommodation which can be offered to ensure that households are allocated a property which is suitable to their needs and “best use” is made of the housing stock. For example, under the proposed scheme only households with children would be eligible for houses, whilst only applicants aged over 60 would be eligible for sheltered accommodation.
- 2.4 Vacant properties are advertised through a range of mechanisms (including the local press, the web site and local offices), with applicants in a relevant band or bands being invited “to bid” for the vacant property. The property is then allocated to the “bidder” with the highest priority within the band in which the property is advertised. Applicants are therefore aware of all vacant properties and are able to “bid” for any dwelling (in which they would like to live), for which they are eligible in terms of property type and banding.
- 2.5 Regular feedback is given on actual lettings through the local press, when the “next round” of properties is advertised.

Section 3

3. The Proposed Choice Based Lettings Scheme

- 3.1 The proposed Choice Based Lettings Scheme has been developed in accordance with a number of principles as set out below:-
 - (a) Equality of Access – to ensure that all applicants have the opportunity to make “a bid” for a property for which they are eligible.
 - (b) Equality of Opportunity – to ensure that no applicant is excluded from the “bidding process” for properties for which they are eligible, regardless of age, ethnicity, or capability.
 - (c) Transparency – to ensure through feedback and monitoring that applicants know which properties have been allocated and the qualifying criteria of the successful “bidder”.
- 3.2 Details of the proposed scheme (which has been formulated in accordance with the framework agreed by Cabinet on 21 September 2006) are set out in the proposed Allocations Policy Statement (attached as Annex 1) and the draft “Somewhere to Live” booklet for housing applicants (attached as Annex 2). A summary of the proposed scheme is also presented in the following sections:-
 - (a) Access to the Housing Register (Section Four).

- (b) Priority Bands (Section Five).
 - (c) Type of Accommodation to be Offered (Section Six).
- 3.3 The proposed Choice Based Lettings scheme also seeks to address the need to review the Council's allocations policy to improve the re-allocation of properties with adaptations to households who require adaptations, which was agreed by Cabinet on 19 October, 2006, following consideration of the Social Inclusion and Housing Select Committee's review of Equality and Access for People with Disabilities.

Section 4

4. Access to the Housing Register

- 4.1 Any household who is aged 16 or over would be able to apply for accommodation, through the Housing Register, with the exception of households:-
- (a) Who have been deemed ineligible due to serious anti-social behaviour which are not unlawfully discriminating.
 - (b) Who do not meet the eligibility criteria for the allocation of accommodation as set out by the Governments Immigration Controls.
- 4.2 In addition, applications from households may be deferred in the following circumstances:-
- (a) A housing related debt is owned to the Council, another landlord or a mortgager.
 - (b) An applicant's current tenancy has not been conducted satisfactorily or their existing home has been damaged.
 - (c) The applicant has been found to be intentionally homeless (note in this case the application will be deferred for a period of 12 months).
 - (d) An applicant has deliberately worsened their housing circumstances to gain additional priority within the allocations scheme.
 - (e) An applicant has provided false or misleading information in order to obtain accommodation.
- 4.3 Priority regarding offers of accommodation for 95% of vacant properties would be given to applicants who, either, live in the Cannock Chase District or who work in the District and have at least two hours travelling time to work, from their existing home.
- 4.4 However, 5% of vacant properties would be allocated to other households who have a local connection with the Cannock Chase area. This would be defined as having immediate family in the Cannock Chase District Council area, the need to care for or receive care from someone living in the District or having previously lived in the District for a period of at least two years. Priority in respect of these 5% of vacancies would be given to nominations from other partner organisations within the Southern Staffordshire and North Warwickshire Choice Based Lettings Scheme, subject to reciprocal agreement from other partners in the scheme.

Section 5

5. Priority Bands

5.1 The proposed scheme would include four priority bands as set out below:-

(a) Band One

Applicants who have an urgent housing need (including households who are statutorily homeless) and live or work *1 in the Cannock Chase area.

Urgent housing need comprises households who:-

- Are statutorily homeless
- Are lacking standard amenities
- Are forced to live apart
- Have a high medical priority
- Suffer domestic violence
- Are subject to racial or other harassment where injunctions are inappropriate
- Are statutorily overcrowded

(b) Band Two

Applicants who have an intermediate housing need and live or work *1 in the Cannock Chase area.

Intermediate housing need comprises households who:-

- Are non-statutorily homeless
- Are Council tenants under-occupying properties
- Are overcrowded in accordance with the Council's standards
- Have to share facilities with another household
- Are considered to be vulnerable
- Work in the Cannock Chase District but live outside the area and have at least two hours travelling time to work.
- Have an intermediate medical priority
- Have a child or children and live in a one bedroom flat
- Have an urgent social need.

(c) Band Three

Applicants who have some housing need and live or work *1 in the Cannock Chase area.

Some housing need comprises households who:-

- Have child or children and live in a flat without overcrowding
- Have a low medical priority
- Have a social need for alternative accommodation
- Wish to be rehoused for any other reason

(d) Band Four

Applicants who have a housing need and have a local connection with the Cannock Chase area.

Notes

*1 Defined as applicants who work in the District and have at least two hours travelling time from their existing home to work.

*2 Defined as having immediate family in the Cannock Chase District Council area, the need to care for or receive care from, someone living in the District or having previously lived in the District or a period of at least two years.

5.2 Applicants in band 2, 3 or 4 would be prioritised to a higher band in cases where three or more criteria in their individual band are met.

5.3 In cases where an applicant has already been placed in Band One if they are statutorily homeless with a duty to rehouse or in specialist accommodation and it is no longer suitable for their needs, or they meet three or more of the Band One criteria, additional priority status would be given over other applicants in Priority Band One, for an initial period of three months, which would then be subject to review.

5.4 Vacant properties would be allocated to the bands in accordance with a target quota system which would be determined annually in accordance with:-

(a) The Council's allocations scheme policy objectives.

(b) The number of applicants on the Housing Register within each Priority Band.

5.5 The initial target quota for the first year of operation will be determined, following the required consultation exercise (as detailed in Section Six) and a preliminary analysis of the number of applicants on the Housing Register who would be placed in each priority band. However, for the purpose of the consultation exercise, it is suggested that the initial quotas are as follows:-

<u>Priority Band</u>	<u>% of vacancies</u>
Band One	50%
Band Two	30%
Band Three	15%
Band Four	5%

Section 6**6. Type of Accommodation to be Offered**

6.1 Applicants will be eligible to "bid for" and be offered the type(s) of accommodation as set out below:-

<u>Property Type</u>	<u>Eligible Households</u>
One bedroom flat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single persons or couples without children
One bedroom flat in a mature block	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single persons aged over 40 years or couples where one party is aged 40 years or over
Two bedroom flat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Households with one child or two children of the same sex, or couples with a housing or medical need for separate bedrooms
One bedroom bungalows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single persons aged 60 or over • Couples where at least one person is aged 60 or over • Single persons or couples with a medical need for ground floor accommodation • Owner occupiers with a medical priority for ground floor accommodation and equity of less than £80,000
Two bedroom bungalows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single people aged 60 and over • Couples or families with children where one person is aged 60 or over • Single people or couples or households with children that have a medical need for ground floor accommodation • Owner occupiers with a medical priority for ground floor accommodation and equity of less than £80,000
Three bedroom bungalow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single persons or couples who are aged 60 and over with two or more children • Couples who have a medical need for ground floor accommodation, and have two or more children or another family member who normally is expected to reside with them. • Couples with one child where they have a medical need for separate bedrooms
Two bedroom house	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Households with one or more children
Three bedroom flat/house/maisonette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Households with two or more children

- | | |
|---|---|
| Four bedroom flat/house | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Households with three or more children |
| Sheltered accommodation | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single people and couples aged 60 or over• Owner Occupiers, aged 60 or over with a medical priority for sheltered accommodation who have an equity of less than £80,000. |
| Properties with adaptations for disabled households | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Households who require the adaptation(s) provided in the property. |

Section 7

7. Consultation Requirements

- 7.1 Sections 167(7) and 168(3) of the Housing Act 1996 requires local authorities, before adopting an allocations scheme or making an alteration which reflects a major change in policy to:-
- (a) Send a copy of the draft scheme, or proposed alteration, to every Registered Social Landlord with whom they have nomination arrangements and provide them with the opportunity to comment.
 - (b) Notify everyone on the Housing Register of the effects of the change.
- 7.2 The DCLG consultation document "Allocation of Accommodation – Code of Guidance for Local Housing Authorities" also recommends that local housing authorities consult with:-
- (a) A wide range of statutory and voluntary organisations including the Social Services Authority and recognised voluntary sector organisations including Tenants and Residents Groups.
 - (b) Service users including existing tenants, applicants on the Housing Register and the wider community.
- 7.3 The Cabinets Office "Code of Practice on written consultation" deems a 12 week period as the standard minimum time period for any written consultation which is undertaken by UK Government Departments and their agencies and the DCLG suggest that this timescale is also adopted by local housing authorities for consultation in respect of changes to their allocations schemes.
- 7.4 It is therefore proposed to undertake a written consultation exercise with Registered Social Landlords, a range of statutory and voluntary organisations and service users, on the proposed Choice Based Lettings Scheme, over a 12 week consultation period. Where appropriate "consultation meetings" will also be held with key stakeholders.
- 7.5 In addition, it is suggested that the views of the Social Inclusion and Housing Select Committee are also sought on the proposed scheme.
- 7.6 The results of the consultation exercise, together with the views of the Social Inclusion and Housing Select Committee will be reported to a future Cabinet meeting, with a revised allocations scheme, which where possible reflects the outcomes of the consultation exercise.

7.7 It is further suggested that the consultation exercise should consider three key issues in relation to the proposed scheme:-

- (a) The priority bands and the criteria for placing housing applications within each band.
- (b) The quota of annual vacancies to be allocated in relation to each priority band.
- (c) The type of accommodation for which applicants are eligible to bid for and be offered.

Section 8

8. Implementation

8.1 It is proposed that subject to the outcomes of the consultation exercise that the proposed Choice Based Lettings Scheme becomes operational with effect from 1 April 2008.

Section 9

9. Contribution to CHASE

9.1 The adoption of a Choice Based Lettings system would contribute to CHASE as follows:-

- (a) Health: Helping to develop a healthy community through the effective use of the social housing stock and the consideration of medical needs when allocating accommodation.
- (b) Access to Skills and Economic Development: Contributing to the development of a strong local economy by helping to remove the artificial barriers between labour mobility and the "social housing market".
- (c) Social Inclusion and Housing: Ensuring that the Council's housing is used to its "best advantage" and helps to build stable, viable and inclusive communities.
- (d) Environment: Contributing to a clean, safe and sustainable environment by providing residents with increased choice with regard to the areas where they wish to live.

Section 10

10. Crime Prevention Implications

10.1 The Council already undertake prevention work throughout the district to reduce the incidents of anti social behaviour on Council estates. By giving people a choice over where they live, it is anticipated that this will create more viable and sustainable communities, and as a result lead to a reduction in crime and disorder.

Section 11

11. Human Rights Act Implications

11.1 Article 8 provides that:-

1. Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.
2. There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

11.2 In considering a Choice Based Lettings Scheme, the Council is complying with legislation which empowers it to do so, at the same time it is considering the needs of the residents of the district.

11.3 A Choice Based Lettings Scheme has a number of advantages to applicants as it provides a transparent system which can be easily understood and ensures equality of access and opportunity.

11.4 For the above reasons the Council's actions are considered to be compatible with the Human Rights Act.

Section 12

12. Data Protection Act Implications

12.1 In cases where Cannock Chase applicants bid for a property owned by a Registered Social Landlord in the Cannock Chase area or for a dwelling in one of the partner areas, details of their application (as held on the Council's Housing Management System) will need to be passed to the relevant Social Landlord for consideration.

12.2 Existing applicants will need to be advised of this and this can be achieved as part of the implementation panels. Advice has been sought from the Council's Information Manager and for future applications for the following paragraph will be inserted into the body of the application form.

"Cannock Chase District Council will hold and use your data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. In the event that your application is for a property in one of our partner areas your personal information will be passed to that partner for the furthering of your request. Your personal information will not be used for any other purpose and will not be passed on for commercial use."

Section 13

13. Risk Management Implications

13.1 The low demand for certain elements of the Council's housing stock has been identified in the Council's risk register. The potential problems include tenant dissatisfaction, vacant properties, income loss and unsustainable communities.

- 13.2 The score rating for the gross risk is 16 which falls within the high risk category. It is however, considered that the implementation of the Council's Decent Homes Improvement programme, together with the sale of certain one-bedroom bungalows will reduce the risk score to 12 placing it in the medium risk category.
- 13.3 It is further considered that the implementation of a Choice Based Letting Scheme will give households additional choice in where they live, assist in combating the low demand for certain properties and help build "stable, viable and sustainable" communities. As a result of these factors, it is considered that the implementation of a Choice Based Lettings Scheme will further reduce the risk score to 8.
- 13.4 There are also a number of risks associated with the development and implementation and thereafter the continued operation of a Choice Based Lettings Scheme, although these have not been included in the Council's risk register at the present time. The risks include:-
- (a) Delays in implementing the scheme due to the amount of work in reassessing the needs of over 1,750 housing applicants, or the development of the required IT system.
 - (b) Dissatisfaction amongst applicants with regard to the priority band in which they have been placed.
 - (c) An increase in the average letting time for void properties as results of the need to advertise and receive "bids" for vacancies before they are allocated.
 - (d) A potential increase in the workload for the Allocations and Supported Housing Team.
- 13.5 The score rating for the gross risk is 16 which falls within the high risk category. It is however, considered that the Council has undertaken or can take a number of actions to mitigate some of the risks which include:-
- (a) The provision of additional employee resources (on a temporary basis) to assist with the reassessment of housing applicants and robust project management of the required IT development.
 - (b) A clearly defined procedure for housing applicants who are dissatisfied with their initial priority band assessment to have this reassessed and if necessary considered by the Council's Appeals and Complaints Panel.
 - (c) A comprehensive assessment of void relet procedures through a "Void Process Working Group", with the aim of "streamlining" and "removing blockages" in void management procedures.
 - (d) An assessment of the additional administration tasks associated with the continued operation of the scheme (following discussions with local authorities who already operate a Choice Based Lettings Scheme) in order to consider how these tasks can be undertaken through the use of the Council's Customer Relations Management system, the re-allocation of duties amongst existing employees or through an additional employee resource.
- 13.6 It is considered that the implementation of these actions will reduce the risk score to 9 placing it within the low risk category. The risk will also be included in the Council's risk register.

Section 14**14. Legal Implications**

- 14.1 In framing its allocation scheme to offer a choice of accommodation to applicants, housing authorities should ensure that their policies and procedures are compatible with obligations imposed on them by other existing legislation, in addition to Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996, including but not limited to:-

S71 of the Race Relations Act 1976
S49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
The Human Rights Act 1998
S19 Freedom of Information Act 2000

S71 of the RRA 1976 requires specific bodies, including local authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different racial groups.

S49A of the DDA 1995 introduces a new duty to promote disability equality which is applicable to all public bodies including housing authorities. This duty came into force in December 2006.

S19 of the FOI 2000 requires public authorities to adopt and maintain a scheme which related to the publication of information by the authority and to publish information in accordance with the scheme. The publication scheme would include the authority's allocation scheme. This is in addition to the duties under s168 of the 1996 Act to make information available about the authority's allocation scheme.

- 14.2 As the allocation of accommodation under Part 6 is one of the tools for combating homelessness, the policies and procedures on choice should also be considered as part of the housing authority's homelessness strategy.
- 14.3 When determining priorities in allocation of housing, housing authorities must ensure that reasonable preference is given to the following categories of people as set out in s167(2) of the 1996 Act.
- 14.4 Whilst it is important that priority accommodation goes to those in greater housing need, it does not mean that in operating a choice based lettings scheme every property which is advertised must be allocated to the applicant with the greatest housing need or only to those in the reasonable preference categories. An allocation scheme can include other policy objectives such as ensuring a balance between meeting the housing needs of existing tenants and new applicants, promoting more sustainable and balanced communities and widening the housing opportunities for those who are not in greatest housing need.
- 14.5 Government guidance suggests that authorities should not set rigid quotas which could restrict their ability to meet the requirements to give reasonable preference overall to applicants in the reasonable preference categories; or seriously impede the ability of applicants in housing need to access appropriate accommodation. However, consideration may wish to be given to the publication of broad targets as part of the authority's allocation scheme.
- 14.6 With regards choice for applicants owed the main homelessness duty, government guidance suggests that, generally speaking, applicants owed the main homelessness duty should have the same opportunity as other applicants to refuse an offer of accommodation which they have

bid for successfully regardless of whether the authority considers the accommodation is suitable for them, without incurring a penalty.

- 14.7 Where applicants owed the main homeless duty are placed in temporary accommodation pending the availability of a settled home, consideration should be given to providing such applicants with priority under a choice based lettings scheme but limit the period for which they are given priority. The consequences of an applicant failing to secure the offer of a suitable home during the priority period should be set out clearly in the authority's allocation scheme and explained to the applicant at the outset.
- 14.8 Where the authority does not wish to extend the priority period, it should consider making a 'final offer' of accommodation under Part 6 in accordance with section 193(7) of the Housing Act 1996.
- 14.9 The policy objective for a regional or sub regional choice based lettings scheme is to achieve the greatest choice and flexibility in meeting tenants' housing needs.
- 14.20 Housing authorities have powers to delegate some of their allocations functions to another body under the Local Authorities (Contracting Out of Allocation of Housing and Homelessness Functions) Order 1996. Such functions could include the central advertising of available properties on behalf of all partners, processing of applications and compiling of a shortlist for each advertised vacancy.

Section 15

15. Financial Implications

- 15.1 The DCLG have allocated £109,769 of grant funding to the Southern Staffordshire and North Warwickshire "partnership" to meet 60% of certain eligible costs regarding the development and implementation of a Choice Based Lettings Scheme for the area. The allocation is however, subject to the remaining 40% being met by the partner organisations. The grant funding will be administered by Lichfield District Council on behalf of the partnership.
- 15.2 The development and implementation costs which need to be met by the Council are as follows:-

		£
(a)	Contribution to shared costs with "partner" organisations	10,000
(b)	Changes to the Council's IT system	20,000
(c)	Consultation and initial publicity	3,000
(d)	Scheme Development and Implementation (including additional temporary employee resources)	15,000
		48,000

- 15.3 The £48,000 cost of developing and implementing the scheme can be met from existing budgets which form part of the agreed 2007-08 Housing Revenue Account Budget or the IT Reserve as appropriate.

- 15.4 There are also certain additional costs (including for example costs associated with the advertisement of properties) which would be associated with the "on-going" operation of Choice Based Lettings Scheme. However, these cannot be fully evaluated until details of the scheme have been determined. It is therefore proposed to consider this issue as part of the further report to Cabinet following the completion of the consultation exercise.
- 15.5 No DCLG funding is however, available to contribute towards the on-going costs of operating a Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

Section 16

16. Human Resource Implications

- 16.1 The detailed development and implementation of the proposed Choice Based Lettings Scheme will require a considerable input of employee time and this cannot be met within the current establishment. The Head of Housing therefore proposes to recruit either a temporary employee for a period of six months or second an existing employee for the same period (which will then necessitate "back filling" of their post) to undertake the "routine" aspects of this work.
- 16.2 The cost of this additional employee resource is estimated to be £15,000 and can be met from existing budgets within the agreed 2007-08 Housing Revenue Account Budget.
- 16.3 The Head of Housing has also indicated that the experience of other local authorities who already operate Choice Based Lettings Schemes, suggests that there are a number of additional administrative tasks associated with the continued operation of such schemes which could not be met within existing employee resources.

Section 17

17. Conclusions

- 17.1 The Government require all local authorities to operate a Choice Based Lettings Scheme by 2010. This report sets out details of a proposed scheme for Southern Staffordshire and North Warwickshire, for consultation with service users and other stakeholders.
- 17.2 The proposed scheme will be amended to reflect the outcomes of the consultation exercise (where appropriate) and this will be subject of a further Cabinet report.
- 17.3 The recommendations are set out in Section 2 of the report.

Background Papers

Annexes

- Annex 1: Proposed Allocations Policy Statement
- Annex 2: Draft "Somewhere to Live" Booklet

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCILDRAFT PROPOSED ALLOCATIONS POLICY STATEMENT**1. Introduction**

1.1 The Council allocates accommodation in accordance with a Choice Based Lettings Scheme which has been formulated in partnership with housing organisations in Southern Staffordshire and North Warwickshire.

1.2 The Choice Based Lettings Scheme seeks to ensure that both social housing and where appropriate, other rented accommodation in the District is “best used” to meet the needs of the Cannock Chase community and helps to build stable, viable and inclusive communities.

1.3 The allocations policy statement sets out the objectives and priorities to which the Council will work when allocating vacant properties to new tenants. In implementing this policy, the Council will ensure that its obligations in law are met.

1.4 The Council’s allocations policy has been formulated in accordance with its agreed strategic housing priorities as detailed, in order of relative importance below:-

(a) Priority One

- To provide housing choice that meets the needs and aspirations of all residents.

(b) Priority Two

- To house vulnerable people.

(c) Priority Three

- To encourage thriving communities where people want to live and stay.

(d) Priority Four

- To modernise the housing stock to provide a decent home for all.

1.5 The Council’s allocations policy will contribute to a number of the Council’s Corporate (CHASE) and Community objectives as follows:-

H = Health: Helping to develop a healthy community through the effective use of the social housing stock and the consideration of medical needs when allocating accommodation.

A = Access to Skills and Economic Development Contributing to the development of a strong local economy by helping to remove the artificial barriers between labour mobility and the “social housing market”.

ANNEX 1

- | | |
|---|--|
| S = Social Inclusion and Housing | Ensuring that the Council's housing stock is used to its "best advantage" and helps to build stable, viable and inclusive communities. |
| E = Environment | Contributing to a clean, safe and sustainable environment by providing residents with increased choice with regard to the areas where they wish to live. |

2. Objectives

The objectives of the Council's allocations policy are set out below:-

- (a) To provide choice to applicants by providing a range of properties from which applicants can choose.
- (b) To allocate accommodation through a simple accessible system which service users and other stakeholders can understand and upon which employees can explain and provide informative advice.
- (c) To address vulnerability by including this as an element of need in the priority criteria and the development of links with other agencies to identify needs and assist in developing appropriate solutions through multi-agency working.
- (d) To comply with the legislative and regulatory requirements as set out in the Housing Act 1985 (as amended), the Homelessness Act 2002, the Housing Act 1996, the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and other legislation which has a bearing on the allocation of housing.
- (e) To maximise the use of the housing stock by transferring tenants who under-occupy properties or live in overcrowded conditions.
- (f) To create sustainable tenancies with viable and inclusive communities by providing applicants with information and choice about where they live and by working with other agencies to address wider community issues.
- (g) To encourage economic growth and mobility for access to employment through the allocation of accommodation who may not otherwise be in defined housing need.
- (h) To review at regular intervals the allocations policy to ensure that it is effective, is relevant to the needs of the Cannock Chase community and complies with legislative and regulatory requirements.

3. Access to the Housing Register

3.1 Any household aged 16 or over can apply for accommodation through the Housing Register, with the exception of households:-

- (a) Who are deemed ineligible due to serious anti-social behaviour in circumstances which are not unlawfully discriminating.
- (b) Who do not meet the eligibility criteria for the allocation of accommodation as set out by the Government's Immigration controls.

ANNEX 1

- 3.2 In addition, applications from households may be deferred in the following circumstances:-
- (a) A housing related debt is owned to the Council, another landlord or a mortgager.
 - (b) An applicant's current tenancy has not been conducted satisfactorily or their existing home has been damaged.
 - (c) The applicant has been found to be intentionally homeless. (Note: in this case the application will be deferred for a period of 12 months).
 - (d) An applicant has deliberately worsened their housing circumstances to gain additional priority within the allocations scheme.
 - (e) An applicant has provided false or misleading information in order to obtain accommodation.
- 3.3 Applicants may appeal against an exclusion from the Housing Register or the deferment of their application. Cases will be initially reviewed by the Head of Housing and in cases where the decision has been upheld, these will then be considered by the Council's Appeals & Complaints Panel.
- 3.4 Priority regarding offers of accommodation for 95% of vacant properties will be given to applicants who live in the Cannock Chase District or who work in the District and have at least two hours travelling time from their existing home.
- 3.5 However, 5% of vacant properties will be allocated to other households who have a local connection with the Cannock Chase area. This is defined as having immediate family in the Cannock Chase District Council area or the need to care for or receive care from someone living in the district or have lived in the District for at least two years previously. Priority in respect of these 5% of vacancies will be given to nominations from other partner organisations within the Southern Staffordshire and North Warwickshire Choice Based Lettings Scheme, subject to reciprocal agreements from other partners in the scheme.

4. Priority Bands

- 4.1 All applications for accommodation will be assessed and placed in one of four bands as set out below:-

(a) **Band One**

Applicants who have an urgent housing need (including households who are statutorily homeless) and live or work in the Cannock Chase area.

Urgent housing need comprises households who:-

- Are statutorily homeless
- Are lacking standard amenities
- Are forced to live apart
- Have a high medical priority
- Suffer domestic violence
- Are subject to racial or other harassment where injunctions are inappropriate
- Are statutorily overcrowded

(b) Band Two

Applicants who have an intermediate housing need and live or work ^{*1} in the Cannock Chase area.

Intermediate housing need comprises households who:-

- Are non-statutorily homeless
- Are Council tenants under-occupying properties
- Are overcrowded in accordance with the Council's standards
- Have to share facilities with another household
- Are considered to be vulnerable
- Work in the Cannock Chase District but live outside the area and have at least two hours travelling time to work
- Have an intermediate medical priority
- Have a child or children and live in a one bedroom flat
- Urgent social need.

(c) Band Three

Applicants who have some housing need and live in the Cannock Chase area.

Some housing need comprises households who:-

- Have child or children and live in a flat without overcrowding
- Have a low medical priority
- Have a social need for alternative accommodation
- Wish to be rehoused for any other reason

(d) Band Four

Applicants who have a housing need and have a local connection ^{*2} with the Cannock Chase area.

Notes

*1 Defined as applicants who work in the District need to have at least two hours travelling time from their existing home.

*2 Defined as having immediate family in the Cannock Chase District Council area, the need to care for or receive care from, someone living in the District or having previously lived in the District for a period of at least two years.

4.2 Applicants will be promoted to a band of higher priority in cases where:-

- (a) An applicant fulfils three or more criteria for an individual band. (Note: In cases where the criteria fall into one or more bands, the applicant will be placed in the highest band).
- (b) An applicant lives in property which has been adapted for a disabled person or other specialist accommodation which is not required for their needs.

ANNEX 1

4.3 In cases where an applicant has been placed in Band One, and:-

(a) Fulfills three or more criteria for this band (Band One);

or

(b) Has been accepted as unintentionally homeless and is in priority need, is in specialist accommodation and it is no longer suitable for their needs

their application will be given additional priority status over other applicants in Band One, for an initial period of three months. At the end of the three-month period this additional priority status will be subject to review.

4.4 Applicants will be prioritised within each band by their date of application to the Housing Register.

4.5 Applicants may appeal against their priority band placement. Cases will be initially reviewed by the Head of Housing, with a further appeal to the Council's Appeals and Complaints Panel.

4.6 In exceptional circumstances offers of accommodation may need to be made outside the criteria stated above. Any exceptions will be agreed by the Head of Housing, following consultation with the Social Inclusion and Housing Leader and reported as part of the performance information published when advertising future vacancies.

4.7 Vacant properties will be allocated in accordance with quota system in relation to each priority band. The quota of vacant properties for each priority band will be determined annually in accordance with:-

(a) The Council's allocation policy objectives.

(b) The number of applicants on the Housing Register within each priority band.

4.8 The initial target quota for 2008-09 is:-

<u>Priority Band</u>	<u>% of Vacancies</u>
Band One	50%
Band Two	30%
Band Three	15%
Band Four	5%

5. Eligibility for Accommodation

5.1 Applicants will be eligible to "bid for" and be offered the type of accommodation as set out below:-

<u>Property Type</u>	<u>Eligible Households</u>
One bedroom flat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single persons or couples without children

ANNEX 1

One bedroom flat in a mature block	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Single persons aged over 40 years or couples where one party is aged 40 years or over
Two bedroom flat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Households with one child or two children of the same sex, or couples with a housing or medical need for separate bedrooms
One bedroom bungalows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Single persons aged 60 or over ● Couples where at least one person is aged 60 or over ● Single persons or couples with a medical need for ground floor accommodation ● Owner occupiers with a medical priority for ground floor accommodation and equity of less than £80,000
Two bedroom bungalows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Single people aged 60 and over ● Couples or families with children where one person is aged 60 or over ● Single people or couples or households with children that have a medical need for ground floor accommodation ● Owner occupiers with a medical priority for ground floor accommodation and equity of less than £80,000
Three bedroom bungalow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Single persons or couples who are aged 60 and over with two or more children ● Couples who have a medical need for ground floor accommodation, and have two or more children or another family member who normally is expected to reside with them. ● Couples with one child where they have a medical need for separate bedrooms
Two bedroom house	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Households with one or more children
Three bedroom flat/house/maisonette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Households with two or more children
Four bedroom flat/house	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Households with three or more children
Sheltered accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Single people and couples aged 60 or over ● Owner Occupiers, aged 60 or over with a medical priority for sheltered accommodation who have an equity of less than £80,000.
Properties with adaptations for disabled households	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Households who require the adaptation(s) provided in the property.

6. The Allocation of Accommodation

- 6.1 Vacant properties will be advertised weekly through a range of mechanisms (including the local press, the website and local offices), with applicants in a relevant band being invited "to bid" for the vacant property.
- 6.2 A vacant property will then be offered to the "bidder" with the highest priority within the band or bands in which the property is advertised. Bids within a priority band will be prioritised by the date of application to the Housing Register. Should the successful "bidder" refuse the offer of the property, the property will be offered to the second highest "bidder".
- 6.2 There are no limits on the number of bids which any applicant can make in one year. However, applicants will be restricted to three actual offers of accommodation in any year. You will only be able to have one active bid at any one time.
- 6.3 Feedback on actual lettings will be included within a subsequent advertisement which invites bids for a "further round" of properties.

7. Implementation

- 7.1 The Council's allocations policy including the implementation of the Choice Based Lettings Scheme will become effective from 1 April 2008.
- 7.2 The Council will publish details of its policy in plain language through its allocations scheme booklet "somewhere to live", which will be made available to all applicants who apply for or are currently on the Housing Register.
- 7.3 Audio versions, large print and translations of "somewhere to live" booklet will also be made available on request.

8. Monitoring

- 8.1 Allocations will be monitored through a computerised recording system with appropriate controls to ensure that allocations comply with the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy. Summary reports on allocations under the scheme will be included in Heartbeat on a monthly basis and submitted to the Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis.
- 8.2 Feedback on actual lettings will be publicised as part of the advertising cycle in the local press and Council Offices and One Stop Shops. Summary details will also appear in the Tenants' Newsletter 'Hometalk'.
- 8.3 Cannock Chase Council will provide information to the Continuous Recording of Lettings System (CORE) for all lettings made.
- 8.4 The 'compliments, comments and complaints' procedure will enable applicants to dispute or question allocations made in accordance with the Council's allocations scheme.

9. Review

- 9.1 The Council's allocations policy will be reviewed after an initial six-month operational period and will then be reviewed every two years. Further reviews may however be necessary to ensure compliance with new legislation.
- 9.2 The quota of properties in relation to each property band will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- 9.3 As part of any review the views of the following stakeholders will be taken into account:-
- (a) Service users
 - (b) The Department for Communities and Local Government
 - (c) Partner organisations within the Southern Staffordshire and North Warwickshire Choice Based Lettings Scheme
 - (d) Registered Social Landlords in the Cannock Chase area
 - (e) The Chase Tenants and Residents Association and other tenant and residents groups
 - (f) Staffordshire County Council
 - (g) Appropriate voluntary agencies and community groups
 - (h) Representatives of identified BME groups, the Sheltered Housing Forum and the Citizens Panel

10. Responsibility

- 10.1 All employees involved with the allocation and letting of properties will be responsible for compliance with this policy.
- 10.2 Overall responsibility for the day-to-day implementation will rest with the Tenancy Services Manager.

11. Associated Documents

- (a) Allocations and Lettings Procedure
- (b) "Somewhere to Live" Booklet
- (c) Housing application form
- (d) Change of Circumstances form
- (e) Social Needs Assessments form
- (f) Medical Needs Assessments form
- (g) Void procedure
- (h) "What is Sheltered Housing" booklet

SOMEWHERE TO LIVE.

DRAFT

A GUIDE TO THE CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL'S
CHOICE BASED LETTINGS POLICY.

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCILS COMMITMENT

THIS COUNCIL IS COMMITTED TO PROVIDE CHOICE TO APPLICANTS BY PROVIDING A RANGE OF PROPERTIES FROM WHICH APPLICANTS CAN CHOOSE.

INTRODUCTION

- A. INTRODUCTION
- B. WHO CAN APPLY FOR ACCOMMODATION?
- C. APPLYING FOR ACCOMMODATION
- D. APPLICATIONS FROM HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS
- E. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I HAVE RETURNED MY FORM?
- F. HOW IS MY PRIORITY BAND AWARDED?
- G. WHAT TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION DOES THE
COUNCIL HAVE
- H. WHAT TYPE OF PROPERTY CAN I BID FOR?
- I. WHERE IS THE COUNCIL'S ACCOMMODATION
LOCATED?
- J. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I AM OFFERED A PROPERTY?
- K. IS THERE ANY OTHER WAY I CAN BE HELPED?
- L. APPEALING DECISIONS MADE BY THE COUNCIL
- M. COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS

A. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this booklet is to explain how the Council decides who should be offered its properties when they become available. This is called the Council's allocations policy.

It tells you who can apply for Council accommodation, how the choice based lettings system works, the type of property you may bid for and where to go for further help.

This document will explain the process that has to be gone through to register on the waiting list and to be allocated a property.

1. Why have an allocations policy?

Although the Council owns 5800 properties, most of these already have households living in them. Due to the large demand for the properties that become vacant, the Council needs to have a system for setting priorities when deciding who should have these properties.

2. How does the allocations policy work?

The policy is intended to help households who are in the greatest housing need, while still giving you a choice over what type of property you live in and where that property is.

To achieve this all households are placed in one of four bands depending on their particular circumstances. This applies to existing Council tenants requesting a transfer, and other households wanting Council accommodation. This is known as the "**Choice Based Lettings Scheme**". When your application has been processed, you will be entered onto a waiting list for properties. This is called the "Housing Register".

When a property becomes available, it is advertised and each property will request bids from those on the waiting list in a particular band. **YOU CAN ONLY APPLY FOR A PROPERTY IF YOU ARE IN THE BAND FROM WHICH THE COUNCIL IS REQUESTING BIDS.** You will only be able to have one active bid at any one time. The property will be offered to the household from the relevant band and who have been waiting the longest.

3. What type of tenancy will I get?

If you are a new Council tenant, you may be given an "Introductory Tenancy". This would be for one year. If there are no problems with the tenancy, e.g. the rent is paid and all other tenancy conditions are met, it will become a "secure" tenancy at the end of the 12 month period. In certain cases, the Council may extend the introductory period beyond 12 months.

We also use non secure tenancies in certain circumstances. Your individual circumstances will be assessed and we will offer the tenancy that is appropriate to your personal situation.

If you are an existing secure or assured tenant of any Council or housing association, you will be given a secure tenancy.

4. Why have different tenancies?

There are important differences between an introductory, a non secure and a secure tenancy. The most important is that it is easier for the Council to evict introductory and non secure tenants. Other differences are highlighted throughout this booklet.

For further information on introductory and non secure tenancies, please pick up a copy of the Council's leaflet 'Introductory and Non-Secure Tenancies' from our Housing Office.

5. What is sheltered housing?

Sheltered housing is housing for people who are aged 60 years and above and offers independence and privacy in a safe and secure environment.

The Council owns and directly manages four sheltered schemes, details of which are given in the 'What is Sheltered Housing?' booklet.

Sheltered housing vacancies will be allocated on the consideration of the points awarded for each applicant together with an assessment of needs as required under Supporting People Regulations.

6. Tenancy Support

There is a tenancy support scheme available to assist you in setting up and maintaining your tenancy. We also offer a tenancy support service to tenants in private tenancies. The aim of the service is to provide support and advice on all tenancy-related issues, such as budgeting, benefits information and access to other support services. Please contact the Housing Office to discuss if you could benefit from this service.

B. WHO CAN APPLY FOR ACCOMMODATION?

1. General

You can apply for a property by placing your name on the Housing Register if: -

- You are aged 16 or over and either live or work in the Cannock Chase area.
- You are not deemed ineligible due to unacceptable behaviour.
- You have a local connection with the Cannock Chase District.
- You are subject to Immigration Control but eligible for housing allocation and homelessness assistance.
- The Council will also accept nominations from other partner organisations within the Southern Staffordshire & North Warwickshire Choice Based Lettings Scheme. This will be subject to a 5% limit on annual vacancies and provided there is a reciprocal agreement between the partner organisations.

2. I am a Council tenant, how do I move to another property?

You will be treated in the same way as other households who are not yet Council tenants. This means that you will be placed into one of the four bands and you can bid for vacancies along with others from the waiting list. The band which you are placed in will depend upon your personal circumstances.

Once you accept another property your application to move will be cancelled. If you wish to transfer to another Council or housing association property you must make a new application. This will be based on your new circumstances and you will be placed in the band appropriate to your application.

An inspection of your property will be carried out prior to you being offered alternative accommodation. Before moving to another property the Council will inspect your existing home, If it is found that damage has been caused to the property either deliberately or by your neglect, the vacant property will be offered to someone else on the waiting list and you will be required to carry out the necessary work. The Council will defer your transfer application until the remedial work has been carried out. Once this has been done the Council will re-inspect the property, if the work is satisfactory your transfer application will be changed from deferred and you may once again bid for vacancies. You, (the tenant), will be liable for the cost of any work required.

Once you have vacated your current home if, after inspection, it is considered that a decorating allowance will need to be awarded for the incoming tenant, any decorating allowance to be granted for **your new** property will be withheld or reduced in value.

3. I am a Council tenant – how many times can I transfer?

You can be considered for a transfer as many times as you wish, but you will need to submit a new application each time.

The band you are placed in will be determined according to the circumstances at your present home; no account will be taken of past circumstances. You should think carefully before accepting any offer of alternative housing as you may be placed in a lower band, if you want to move again.

4. Can I apply with my partner?

Yes – if you are planning to marry or if you wish to live together you can make a joint application by completing an Application for Housing Form.

5. Special Rules

Before a property can be offered, special rules apply to:-

- Owner occupiers
- Homeless households
- Members of Her Majesties Forces and their families

- Households with no fixed abode/sleeping rough
- Persons with relationship problems
- Persons with current or former tenant arrears
- Person who are under 18 years of age
- Households living outside the Cannock Chase Area
- Persons ineligible due to unacceptable behaviour
- Persons subject to Immigration Control and ineligible for Housing Allocation and Homelessness Assistance

If you fall into any of these groups, you must read the following notes carefully.

6. Owner occupiers

Although any owner occupier can place their name on the Housing Register, they can only be considered for accommodation if one of the following criteria is met:-

- The Council has an obligation to help you because you are unintentionally homeless and in a priority need category as defined by part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended 2002) You will be placed in Band 1.
- Your home is affected by a Demolition or Closing Order You will be placed in Band 1.
- You have been awarded an intermediate medical priority, or above, by the Council's Medical Panel, and the equity released from the sale of your home would be £80,000 or less, you will be placed in Band 1. and you can bid for a one or two bedroom bungalow or flat.

If your application does not meet one of these criterion, then you will be placed in Band 4.

7. Homeless Households

If the Council has accepted a duty towards you as a homeless household you will be placed in Band 1 and be awarded priority status to ensure you receive reasonable preference in the allocation of Council properties.

- If you do not bid for a property within two months of your acceptance the Council will review the application and this may result in you being placed in a lower band.
- If you refuse a suitable offer of accommodation:
- This may result in you being placed in a lower band.
- The Council's duty towards you as a homeless household will end, i.e. the Council will no longer have a statutory duty to accommodate you. This may result in you being placed in a lower band.

- Your application could be deferred for a maximum period of 12 months.

8. Members of Her Majesty's Forces

If you or a member of your household is serving in H M Forces and you are living in service accommodation you may be eligible for assistance. HMF households are considered in a similar way to homeless households.

You will be eligible for a Cannock Chase Council property if:-

- Your household is a family with children, or you fall into one of the other priority groups as defined by the Housing Act 1996 and;
- You have a local connection with the Cannock Chase area and;
- You are leaving service accommodation through no fault of your own.

If you are living in service accommodation and have a local connection with the district, you are entitled to place your name on the Housing Register. You should inform this Council when you know your discharge date, you will be placed into Band 1 and you may bid for suitable vacancies when they are advertised.

9. Households who have no fixed abode or who are sleeping rough

A household with 'no fixed abode' is defined as somebody who sleeps at a number of different places, usually with family and friends.

A 'rough sleeper' is defined as somebody who does not sleep in a recognised residential dwelling and has not done so for prolonged periods of time.

If you are classed as no fixed abode you will be placed in **Band 3**

10. Persons with Relationship Problems

If you and your partner are joint tenants of a council property and have decided to separate and require Council accommodation, you should both place your names on the Housing Register.

Any application made for family accommodation following a relationship breakdown, will be deferred for a period of six months to allow for issues regarding the care and residency of any children to be resolved.

Where one bedroom accommodation is required for the partner leaving the family home in order that the children of the relationship can remain, there will be no deferral period.

Qualification for housing is that you are a council tenant, private tenant or lodger.

When confirmation has been received of the arrangements for any children, applications for two, three and four bedroom accommodation will be considered in line with all other applicants. However, to reflect the fact that the children may not be resident with the applicant on the permanent basis, you will be placed in Band 3

11. Owner occupiers

Where an owner occupier has left the family home, requests a one bedroom flat, and continues to maintain the family home, the application is to be dealt with as a lodger/tenant depending on their current circumstances, and you will be placed in Band 3

Owner occupiers requesting other types of accommodation will be dealt with in accordance with the existing Allocations Policy.

12. Households with Mortgage Arrears, Current or Former Tenant arrears.

If you have rent arrears either at your current property or a former property with Cannock Chase Council or any other landlord, your application will be deferred and you will not be able to bid for vacancies.

If you have mortgage arrears either at your current property or a former property, your application will be deferred and you will not be able to bid for vacancies.

However, in exceptional circumstances it may be possible to remove the deferment if you have paid a substantial part of your arrears and made adequate arrangements to clear the rest of the monies owing. Please let us know if you have an agreement to pay and have paid off substantial part of your arrears, your application will then be reviewed by the Tenancy Services Manager and your application may be placed in the appropriate band. In such cases however, you will not be granted a secure tenancy until all arrears are paid.

13. Applicants who are under 18 years of age

You can place your name on the Housing Register when you are aged 16 or over. However you will not normally be offered a property until you are aged 18 as you cannot legally hold a tenancy until this age.

In exceptional circumstances you may be made an offer of a property before you are 18, although in most cases this will be in the form of specialist accommodation which provides support services.

14. Households who live outside of the Cannock Chase area

If you live outside of the district you can place your name on the Housing Register. However, you will only be offered a property:-

- If you are over 60 years of age and you have, at any time in the past, lived in the district for at least two years. You will be placed in Band 4.
- If you have a close relative living in the district and you need to provide or receive support from them., you will placed in Band 4
- You have permanent employment within the Cannock Chase District. You must provide written evidence from your employer that you work for a minimum 20 hours per week and that you are not employed on a fixed term contract for less than 12 months. If the travel time from your home to work is under two hours you will be placed in band 4

ANNEX 2

- As a general rule, a travelling time greater than two hours a day is considered unacceptable, if your journey from home to work exceeds two hours you will be placed in band 2.

15. Ineligibility for Housing Allocation

Unacceptable behaviour

The Homelessness Act 2002 allows Council's to determine whether an applicant is ineligible for an allocation of a tenancy due to serious unacceptable behaviour.

The purpose is to assist local authorities to deal with the problem of anti-social behaviour on Council estates.

Each application is assessed to determine if you are eligible for allocation of a property. The following may result in your application being investigated further:-

- People who have previously been evicted by this Council or another local authority or social housing provider, for reason of anti-social behaviour or for causing damage to the landlords property.
- People who have had an injunction under Part V of the Housing Act 1996 obtained against them by the Council.
- People who have been convicted of an offence relating to the supplying of drugs and who have received a custodial sentence of at least 2 ½ years, or have received a shorter sentence that is not yet spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. (Reference is made to the Staffordshire Joint Protocol for Information Exchange).
- Any person where this Council, or any other local authority or registered social landlord has a current injunction, or has obtained an injunction within the past three years against them, due to their behaviour towards housing staff.
- Any person convicted of a violent or threatening offence towards a Council member, a member of staff of this Council, or any other local authority or another registered social landlord within the past five years.
- If you, or a member of your household, are considered to have committed acts of unacceptable behaviour you may be requested to provide additional information or attend and interview. If the Council then decide you are ineligible you will receive a written decision giving reasons why you have been determined as ineligible for allocation.

In these cases your application will not be placed into a band and the application deferred. Should you disagree with the decision you are entitled to a review of the decision by the Council's Appeals and Complaints Panel.

Immigration Control – Eligibility for housing allocation and homelessness assistance.

Applicants who are subject to immigration control and fulfil the following criteria may be eligible for housing allocation:

ANNEX 2

- Refugee status
- Exceptional leave to remain – provided there is no condition that you shall not be a charge on public funds.
- Indefinite leave to remain provided you are habitually resident in the CTA (Common Travel Area) and leave to remain was not granted in the previous 5 years on the basis of sponsorship in relation to maintenance and accommodation.
- Nationals of a country that have ratified the European Convention on Social and Medical Assistance (ECSMA) or the European Social Charter (ESC) provided you are lawfully present in the UK.
- From one of the “A8” Countries and meet conditions as determined by the Secretary of State.

If you are unsure about your eligibility you should register your application together with your status. You will be advised whether you will be placed into a band.

C. APPLYING FOR ACCOMMODATION?

1. How do I get my name on the Housing Register?

You should complete an application for housing form and return it to the Cannock Office or One Stop Shops detailed at the back of this booklet. If you live outside the Cannock Chase area, or are unsure where to send your form, it should be returned to the Area Office.

It is important that the form is completed correctly otherwise it will be returned to you. You will not be placed on the Housing Register and considered for Council housing until the form is fully completed. If you require help in completing the form, staff at any of the Council's offices will be pleased to help you.

Important: If you attempt to gain priority by withholding or giving false information, your application will be deferred and if you obtain a property by such means you will be evicted.

2. Do I need to send anything else in with my application?

Yes, in certain circumstances:

- If you live outside the Cannock Chase area and are applying for housing because you work in the area, you will need to provide a letter from your employer confirming that you have permanent employment in the area and that you work over 20 hours per week.
- If you are pregnant; proof of pregnancy certificate stating the date your baby is due.
- Confirmation of the ages and address of any children included in your application; e.g. a photocopy of tax credit details or child benefit award letter.
- Confirmation of your current address, and your National Insurance number. If you do not, your name will not be placed on the Housing Register.

ANNEX 2

You may also need to provide copies of other documents and if this is the case you will be advised at the time your application is registered.

Important The original of any document (such as proof of pregnancy certificate) should not both be posted, a photocopy should be provided. Area office staff will be pleased to take a copy for you if necessary.

3. When my form has been processed, do I need to contact you again?

Yes – all applicants, including Council tenants will have to re-register each year on the anniversary of their application.

You will receive a form which you should sign and return it to the Cannock Housing Office or One Stop Shop. If you do not do so, your application would not be complete and you would not be actively considered for housing.

4. What type of property can I apply for?

This depends on your circumstances you can however apply for any vacancy within the band that you have been placed in. The Council reserves the right to allocate properties to someone outside of their band under exceptional circumstances, these management allocations will be reported as part of the feedback and monitoring process.

5. Can I live on a particular estate?

Yes – If you wish to live on a particular estate then you should only bid for a vacancy that is advertised in your band and in the area you wish to live in. You are advised however that some estates are in greater demand and you may have to wait longer for a successful bid.

Generally, you will be re-housed more quickly if you are happy to consider living in a wide area of the district rather than restrict your choice to one particular estate.

We would advise you to consider all housing options to maximise your housing opportunities.

6. What if I am unable to live at my present accommodation because of an illness or disability?

If your illness or disability means that your present home is not suitable for your needs, additional priority may be given to your application. Your illness or disability and how your current housing type impacts on you may effect which band you are placed in. If you wish to apply for a medical assessment you should complete a 'Medical Needs Assessment Form'. When this has been returned, arrangements will be made for the Council's medical panel to assess your application.

D. APPLICATION FROM HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS

1. What if I am homeless or think I will be homeless in the future?

You should contact our Housing Office as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your situation. Your application will be dealt with urgently by the Housing Options Team who can assist you in your efforts to prevent homelessness and offer information on housing law. In

ANNEX 2

addition, the Housing Options Team will be able to discuss other housing options available to you.

If you are actually homeless and have no where to stay, it is possible that the Council could help with temporary accommodation. Assistance is not available in all cases and the Homeless Officer will be able to advise you if this is a service we are able to provide you.

Once your application has been thoroughly investigated, the Council will make a formal homeless decision in writing. This advises you if the Council has a duty to re-house you or not and for how long. You will be informed of the right to request a review of this decision if you disagree. There are several stages to the application and it is necessary to provide various proofs based on your individual circumstances. Our Homeless Officer will advise you of the information required to complete your assessment.

If a full homeless duty is accepted, your application will be placed on the Council's Housing Register in Band 1 and you can bid for suitable vacancies immediately.

Where this is not the case, we will provide information, advice and support to assist you in your efforts to secure alternative accommodation.

2. How many properties can I be offered?

If the Council has accepted a duty towards you as a homeless household you will be placed in Band 1 and be awarded priority status to ensure you receive reasonable preference in the allocation of Council properties.

- If you do not bid for a property within two months of your acceptance the Council will review the application and this may result in you being placed in a lower band.

If you refuse a suitable offer of accommodation:

If, after viewing the property, you decide that it is not suitable you can refuse the property and remain on the waiting list and continue to bid for vacancies. We will ask for your reasons for refusal. Under certain circumstances e.g. statutory homeless cases, the refusal may mean that you lose your band 1 status.

- This may result in you being placed in a lower band.
- The Council's duty towards you as a homeless household will end, i.e. the Council will no longer have a statutory duty to accommodate you. This may result in you being placed in a lower band.
- Your application could be deferred for a maximum period of 12 months.

E. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I HAVE RETURNED MY FORM?

1. When I've returned my form, what then?

We will check the information contained in your application and send you an acknowledgement to confirm that your application has been received.

ANNEX 2

If you have not completed the form correctly, it will be returned to you. It will not be assessed until all questions have been fully answered.

If you are eligible to be placed on the Housing Register, you will be notified of how which band you have been placed in.

2. What should I do if my circumstances change?

You should contact the Housing Department as soon as possible to inform us of your change in circumstances. In most cases you will be asked to complete a 'Change of Circumstances form' but if you have moved address or if you wish to be re-housed with your partner, you will have to complete a new Application for Housing Form.

We will assess your change in circumstances and, if necessary re-assess the band awarded to you. You will be notified of the new band you have been placed in.

Important: You must not deliberately make your circumstances worse. If you do your application could be deferred for a period of up to 12 months.

3. How are individual properties allocated?

The law only allows Council's to allocate its properties to households from the Housing Register. When a property becomes available, it is allocated to the household in the appropriate band who have been waiting the longest.

F. HOW IS MY PRIORITY BAND AWARDED?

Banding is awarded based on individual circumstances. This means that those households in the greatest housing need have the highest priority. The Council will operate a system based on 4 priority bands.

Although anyone can apply, you will need to be already living in the Cannock Chase District or be able to demonstrate a connection with the district to be placed in Bands 1 to 4. Examples include close family living in the district, a job in the district, the need to care for, or receive care from someone who lives in the district.

If someone deliberately worsens their housing situation in order to obtain housing they will be placed into band 3 or 4.

BAND 1

All applicants who have an urgent housing need (including households who are statutorily homeless and live or work in the Cannock Chase area.

Condition of property

Property subject to a Closing Order Confirmation of closing order from Cannock District Council.

Homeless duty

ANNEX 2

Copy of determination letter from the Housing Options Team which states that they have a statutory duty to assist the applicant in obtaining housing.

Lack of facilities

If the accommodation currently occupied does not have access to a hot water supply, bathroom, inside toilet or kitchen, e.g. bed and breakfast, hostels, caravans, or would be considered unfit for habitation.

Parents forced to live apart

Evidence or reason must be supplied as to why the parents of dependent children are forced to live apart. If it could reasonably be expected for both parents to live in either of the homes that they occupy, they will not be included in band 1.

Child separated from parents

Evidence must be provided as to the reason the child cannot occupy the current home of the parent, and that they will live as a family unit if suitable accommodation is allocated.

High medical priority

An urgent priority awarded by the Council's Medical Assessment Panel is required to substantiate that the current housing is totally unsuitable for occupation due to the medical condition of the applicant. Examples of this are that a wheelchair user occupies a home where facilities are upstairs and therefore inaccessible, where an applicant is due to be discharged from hospital and their current accommodation is totally unsuitable. Referrals will also be taken from mental health professionals should the current housing be having a severe effect on an applicant's mental well being.

Domestic violence referrals

Applicants who have endured domestic violence can be referred by professional agencies, i.e. police or a refuge. Domestic violence would refer to any person being physically or mentally abused by a partner or relative with whom they currently reside and for whom the use of an injunction or other form of legal action is not appropriate.

Harassment including racial

This covers applicants who are referred by statutory agencies, e.g. police, as they are enduring harassment, and for whom the use of injunctions or other legal action is inappropriate, and who are therefore unable to remain in their current home. Harassment implies a degree of deliberate intent with some underlying motive and can be distinguished from neighbour disputes or nuisance. Harassment includes action on grounds of age, sex, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, political views, marital or social status and racial harassment on the grounds of colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins.

Statutory Overcrowding

Environmental Health Officers report stating current property overcrowded according to statutory definition. (note your housing office can arrange for this assessment to be carried out if appropriate).

Vulnerability (special needs)

This covers applicants who are referred by professional agencies as vulnerable and whose current housing is unsuitable and affecting their vulnerability to the point where it is having a detrimental effect on their quality of life. Detailed reports would be required from a professional agency to substantiate that the applicant could not reasonably remain in their current home.

BAND 2

Applicants who have an intermediate housing need and live or work in the Cannock Chase area.

Homeless - no statutory duty to re house

Applicants who provide proof of their homelessness, including those leaving institutions or tied accommodation and for whom there is no statutory duty for Cannock Chase District Council to assist in re-housing.

Under-occupation

Applicants who currently rent a property from the Council and currently under-occupy the property by two or more bedrooms. The criteria for under-occupation will be based on that for overcrowding.

Overcrowding

Where an applicant is currently residing in a property and there is evidence of overcrowding. Overcrowding is based on the standard that a separate bedroom is needed for each of the following:

Applicant and spouse/ partner

Each child

Expected child where no bedroom available

A person whom the Council's Medical Assessment Panel considers should sleep in a room alone and will undertake to do so

Where an applicant has to share a kitchen, living room, WC and bathroom with other occupants and the occupants are not immediate family members.

Vulnerability (special needs)

Where some form of vulnerability has been highlighted by professional agencies, and it is apparent it is being affected by the current housing situation e.g. learning difficulties. To receive or provide support If an applicant currently lives outside the district and needs to move to receive or provide support to a close family member who resides in the Cannock Chase District.

Medical needs

Where an applicant's mental/physical health is being affected by their current housing, and the Council's Medical Assessment Panel has awarded an intermediate medical priority.

Social needs

Where the applicant has been awarded an urgent priority from the Social Needs Assessment Panel.

Access to work

Applicants who work within the Cannock Chase District and currently live outside of the area, and the travelling time from your home to work exceeds two hours.

Children in flats

If you live in a one bedroom flat and have a child under the age of 16.

BAND 3

Applicants have some housing need and live in the Cannock Chase area

Children in flats – If you are not overcrowded but have a child under the age of 16 and you live in a flat.

Social needs

Where the applicant has been awarded a high priority from the Social Needs assessment.

BAND 4

Applicants who have a housing need and/or live in the Cannock Chase area.

Applicants who live outside the Cannock Chase District may demonstrate some need for re-housing, but do not have a connection to Cannock Chase district e.g. through family, work or the need to give or receive care.

Priority Status.

Priority status will be awarded to band 1 applicants in the following situations:-

- a) Where an applicant has been accepted as being unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

ANNEX 2

- b) Where an applicant is in specialist accommodation and it is no longer suitable for their needs, and by vacating that property it is being made available for occupation for a household for whom it is suitable.
- c) Where an applicant fulfils 3 or more of the band 1 criteria. NB Where criteria fall between one or more bands, the applicant will be placed in the highest band.

Priority status will be valid for 3 months, at which time the applicant's case will be reviewed.

Applicants awarded a priority status will take preference over other band 1 applicants applying for the same property.

Award of priority status will be determined by the Team Leader Allocations and Sheltered Housing and the Allocations Officer.

G. WHAT TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION DOES THE COUNCIL HAVE?

The Council has a variety of housing stock throughout its district made up of the following:-

- One, two and three and four bedroom flats.
- Two and three bedroom maisonettes.
- One, two and three bedroom bungalows.
- Two, three and four bedroom houses
- Sheltered bedsits and one bedroom flats.
- Mature person's flats (1 bedroom only for applicants aged over 40 years)

H. WHAT TYPE OF PROPERTY CAN I HAVE?**1. General**

This depends on your age and the size of your household. The types of property for which you are eligible are outlined below. N.B. If you are pregnant, your child will be counted as a member of your household 3 months prior to the expected date of delivery.

Important: You should examine this table carefully before you complete your application for housing form.

Property Type	Eligible Households
One bedroom flat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single persons or couples without children
One bedroom flat in a mature block	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single persons aged over 40 years or couples where one party is aged 40 years or over

ANNEX 2

Two bedroom flat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Households with one child or two children of the same sex, or couples with a housing or medical need for separate bedrooms
One bedroom bungalows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single persons aged 60 or over Couples where at least one person is aged 60 or over Single persons or couples with a medical need for ground floor accommodation Owner occupiers with a medical priority for ground floor accommodation and equity of less than £80,000
Two bedroom bungalows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single people aged 60 and over Couples or families with children where one person is aged 60 or over Single people or couples or households with children that have a medical need for ground floor accommodation Owner occupiers with a medical priority for ground floor accommodation and equity of less than £80,000
Three bedroom Bungalow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single persons or couples who are aged 60 and over with two or more children Couples who have a medical need for ground floor accommodation, and have two or more children or another family member who normally is expected to reside with them. Couples with one child where they have a medical need for separate bedrooms
Two bedroom house	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Households with one or more children
Three bedroom flat/house/maisonette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Households with two or more children
Four bedroom flat/house	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Households with three or more children

ANNEX 2

Sheltered Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single people and couples aged 60 or over • Owner Occupiers, aged 60 or over with a medical priority for sheltered accommodation who have an equity of less than £80,000.
----------------------------	--

I. WHERE IS THE COUNCIL'S ACCOMMODATION LOCATED?

The area covered by Cannock Chase Council includes Hednesford, Rugeley, Norton Canes and Heath Hayes as well as Cannock. Full details of all estates are available from your housing office.

J. HOW DO I BID FOR VACANT PROPERTIES?**1. How can I make a bid?**

If you see a property advertised and you meet the criteria, you can register your interest by completing the coupon in the newspaper, via the website, or by telephoning or coming into the office or One Stop Shop, e mail or SMS text message.

2. Can I bid for more than one property?

The Council wants you to be happy in your home. Bidding for more than one property will not increase the chance of you being re-housed quickly. You will only be considered for a vacancy if you meet all of the criteria. You will not be considered for vacant properties once your bid has been successful and you are considering an offer. You may only have one active bid at any time.

3. How will I know if my bid has been successful?

Each property advertised will have a closing date for bids attached to it. You will be notified within 5 working days if you have been successful. If you have not heard from us within that time you should assume you have been unsuccessful and continue to bid for other vacancies.

4. How do I receive an offer of a property?

You will be sent a letter that will make you a formal offer of the accommodation. This letter will ask you to contact the Housing Department to discuss the property that has been offered. You will be given the opportunity to view the property when the keys are available before you make a final decision about whether or not you want to accept the property.

5. What if I turn down the offer?

If, after viewing the property, you decide that it is not suitable you can refuse the property and remain on the waiting list and continue to bid for vacancies. We will ask for your reasons for refusal. Under certain circumstances e.g. statutory homeless cases, the refusal may mean that you lose your band 1 status along with any priority status if appropriate.

6. What if I want to transfer after I move in?

Once you have accepted accommodation, your application will be cancelled. If you wish to move to another Council or Housing Association property you must complete a new Application for Housing Form. Your new circumstances will be assessed and you will be placed in the relevant band, in accordance with your housing need.

K. IS THERE ANY OTHER WAY I CAN BE HELPED?**1. Housing Options Team (Private Renting)**

We recognise that there are many occasions where you might benefit from some housing advice and information and for this purpose trained staff are available to discuss your individual housing needs and wide range of Housing options. The services provide include:

- Housing advice and Information
- Rent advice and deposit guarantee scheme
- Details of landlords and vacancies within the district
- Homeless prevention
- Liaise with other agencies
- Mediation services
- Information on Home Buy and shared ownership schemes

There is a wide range of advice and information available. This list is not exhaustive but outlines some of the services you can access free of charge. You can contact the Housing Options Team direct at the Housing Advice Centre, 29/31 Park Road, Cannock, WS11 1JN, or by telephone on (01543) 577572.

2. Homeless Prevention

If you feel that you may lose your accommodation and become homeless, you should contact our Housing Office or The Housing Options Team for help and advice as we may be able to prevent or reduce your homelessness. We can talk to your landlord, liaise with the benefits agencies about your claim, provide information about grants and loans available to you, and help explain Housing Law to ensure that you are fully aware of your rights and responsibilities.

If you feel that your home is potentially at risk, please contact us to discuss your situation and identify ways in which we can help you. We can also refer you direct to the Housing Options team for more information.

3. Housing Associations

A number of Housing Associations own property within the Cannock Chase area.

ANNEX 2

These are independent non-profit making organisations which provide properties at affordable rents for households in need.

Although each Association maintains its own waiting list, the Council is able to nominate people who have been accepted on its Housing Register, for vacant properties. If you wish to be considered for a Housing Association property, you must complete the relevant section of your Application for Housing Form.

Some Associations also have properties that they sell under shared ownership arrangements. This means that you can buy part of the property and pay rent for the remainder to the Housing Association. If you are interested in this scheme, please contact the Housing Options Team for further information, telephone 01543 577572..

You may also wish to apply directly to a Housing Association and the list of the Associations which have properties in the Cannock Chase area is available from your local office.

4. Mutual Exchanges

If you are a Council tenant you may find another tenant who would like to exchange (or swap) homes with you. To help you find a suitable exchange you can advertise your home, free of charge at any of the Area Offices or in the Council's Hometalk magazine.

Before the exchange can take place both parties must apply to the Council (using a special application form available from the Housing Office), for written permission to move. You must not exchange until you have received permission in writing.

When seeking permission from the Council for an exchange, we will consider the following before any decision is made:

- Neither of you have rent arrears.
- Neither property will be overcrowded or under occupied
- There is no Notice Seeking Possession pending or served on either property
- The property has not been specially designed or adapted for a disabled person and no person requiring the adaptation would be living there if the exchange takes place
- The property is part of a sheltered housing scheme and should the exchange take place, no qualifying person would be living there
- Any other information which may affect the decision made whilst taking into account current legislation and offering a consistent service.

5. Move UK

Move UK is a scheme that the Council is a part of, enabling tenants to exchange homes around the country. You need your landlords permission to register and then your details will go on the Move UK Register so that your property can be advertised and you can search for other properties that you might like to exchange with. You can access the scheme via the website www.moveuk.com or by telephone on 0845 606 6161.

ANNEX 2

L. APPEALING DECISIONS MADE BY THE COUNCIL

You have the right to request a review of any decision made by the Council. The original decision will be first reviewed by the Head Of Housing, should you still disagree then you have the right to have the case reviewed by the Council's Appeals Panel. In certain circumstances you can refer the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman.

M. COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS

The Council is committed to serving the community in the most efficient and courteous way. We are constantly trying to improve our services and the way we deliver them.

We welcome any feedback on your experiences of accessing Council services and have a leaflet which explains our complaints procedure and encourages you to tell us your experiences so that we can continue to work towards serving the community to the highest standards.

Cannock Housing Office

Civic Centre
Beecroft Road
Cannock
Staffordshire
WS11 1BG

Telephone 01543 462621

Hednesford One Stop Shop

The Library
Market Street
Hednesford

Telephone 01543 451745

Rugeley One Stop Shop

Anson Street
Rugeley
Staffordshire
WS15 2BA

Telephone 01889 583474

Web Address: www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk