



Allocations Scheme Questionnaire 2013

What is the Allocations Scheme?

The Allocations Scheme is the policy the Council uses to allocate social housing within Oxford to those in housing need. All housing authorities must have an allocation scheme. The demand for social housing in Oxford is high and only a limited number of properties become available each year. There are over 5000 applicants on the housing register and it is expected only 500 properties will become available to let during 2012/13. The Allocations Scheme aims to make the best use of the low number of properties becoming available each year.

Why do we need to change the Allocations Scheme?

The current Allocations Scheme came into effect in July 2009.

The scheme is also being revised to take into account of the Council's new tenancy and homeless strategies and central Government welfare changes such as the Localism Act, new allocations Code of Guidance and the Welfare Reform Act.

Although the Allocations Scheme largely meets current legislation and recommendations set out in the Allocations Code of Guidance there are a number of key areas that will need to be considered before revising the existing scheme.

Your views on the new Allocations Scheme

Before introducing the new Allocations Scheme later on this year the Council would like to hear your views on the proposed changes which are listed below along with a brief explanation of the reasons for each of the changes.

Completed questionnaires should be returned by **Friday 31st May 2013** *(see last page for details of how and where to send it)*

Qualification for Inclusion on the Housing Register

Local Connection

The Council when allocating social housing in Oxford normally gives preference to housing applicants with a local connection to Oxford meaning they must normally live, work or have close family relatives in Oxford.

1The new Allocations Scheme proposes:

The Council should be able to take into account whether an applicant has a local connection to Oxford when deciding whether they can qualify for inclusion on the Housing Register with some exceptions; including members of the armed forces.

Please select one option.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Capital, Savings and Income

Social housing is a scarce resource and housing applicants who are considered to have sufficient capital (including property), savings and/or income to resolve their own housing situation are unlikely to be made an offer of housing.

2 The new Allocations Scheme proposes:

The Council should normally exclude housing applicants, or adult members of their household, with £16000 or more in capital and savings and/or sufficient income to resolve their own housing situation (with some exceptions for complex or high needs cases and those applying for shared ownership properties only).

To what extent do you agree with this proposal:

Please select one option.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Rent Arrears

The Council when allocating social housing does not normally offer social housing to housing applicants with rent arrears. The changes in law mean the Council could now exclude housing applicants from the inclusion on the Housing Register if they have serious rent arrears (or other property related debts such as re-charges for damage to a property caused by the housing applicant or a member of their household).

3 The new Allocations Scheme proposes:

The Council should be able to take into account rent arrears when considering if an applicant should qualify for inclusion on the Housing Register. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal.

Please select one option.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

The Council takes ASB very seriously. Housing applicants guilty of ASB are not considered for offers of social housing until they can demonstrate that they would be potentially suitable tenants. In the past due to strict legislation it has been very hard to exclude applicants from the housing register on the grounds of ASB but the law has now changed to make this simpler.

4 The new Allocations Scheme proposes:

The Council should be able to exclude a housing applicant from inclusion on the housing register where they, or a member of their household, have been responsible for ASB unless they can evidence their behaviour has been amended and another tenancy has been successfully maintained.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal.

Please select one option.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Housing Need Priority Bands

There are five Housing Need Priority Bands ranging from Band 1 (very high housing need) down to Band 5 (low housing need). Housing applicants on the Housing Register have their housing needs assessed based on their current circumstances and are placed in one of the Bands.

There are over 5000 applicants on the housing register and the majority (over 3000) are in Band 5 and unlikely to receive an offer of housing unless their circumstances change and their housing need increases.

Changes to Existing Priority Bands

Homeless Applicants; there are two separate groups of homeless applicants; those in a priority need group (such as homeless families and pregnant applicants) and those not in a priority need (such as single applicants or couples not considered vulnerable).

5 The Council is proposing to reduce the priority given to Homeless Applicants on the housing register. To improve the chances of other housing applicants in similar housing need on the Housing Register being made an offer of accommodation and to help re-house them before they become homeless. Including housing applicants living in overcrowded or unsuitable accommodation with their parents, other family members or in the private sector (see the draft allocations scheme for further information).

We are proposing moving priority homeless applicants currently in band 2 (homeless families, pregnant applicants) to band 3 and non-priority homeless from band 3 (single applicants and those not considered vulnerable) to band 4.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal.

Please select one option.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Time on List compared to Time in Housing Need/Band

There are two main ways of prioritising applicants in the same housing need (the same band) for housing:

(1) Registration date - the time they have been on the housing register

Or

(2) Priority Band Start Date - the time they have been in housing need/band

Currently applicants are prioritised based on the time they have been on the housing register but it could be considered fairer for applicants to be prioritised on the time they have actually been in housing need – for example the time they have been living in overcrowded accommodation or have spent being homeless.

6 The new Allocations Scheme proposes:

The Council prioritises housing applicants in the same Housing Need Priority Band by their Priority Band Start Date instead of the time they have been on the housing register.

Existing applicants will be protected by transitional arrangements to minimise the initial impact of this change. So applicants currently on the housing register when the new Allocations Scheme comes into effect will have their Registration Date used as their Priority Band Start Date if this is earlier.

Please select one option.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

The Size of Property an Applicant is Eligible to Apply For

Social housing is a scarce resource and it is important that the Council and other Private Registered Providers of social housing within Oxford make the best use of the properties that become available.

The existing Allocations Scheme has rules that are used to calculate number of bedrooms an applicant requires. However, they will need to be changed and made stricter due to changes being introduced through the Welfare Reform Act including the introduction of the “bedroom tax” from April 2013. So as to not place working age applicants and their families into accommodation that they cannot afford where their housing benefit could fall substantially short of the rent due. The recommendations in the new Allocations Code of Guidance, issued by the Department of Communities & Local Government, also need to be taken into account.

7 Age of Household Members

The draft Allocations Scheme proposes:

The Council increases the age at which children of the opposite sex are considered to be able to share a bedroom:

From

“Two children of the opposite sex aged under 7”

To

“Two children of the opposite sex aged under 10”

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal.

Please select one option.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

8 The draft Allocations scheme proposes that:

The Council increases the age at which children of the same sex are considered able to share a bedroom:

From

“Two children of the same sex where the oldest child is between 10 and 15 and the age gap is less than 10 years”

To

“Two children of the same sex aged under 16”

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal

Please select one option.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

9 Under-Occupiers In Social Housing

The Draft Allocations Scheme proposes:

The Council continues to allow tenants living in Social Housing on the Transfer List who are currently in a property that is too big for them to be able to move to a smaller property even if it has 1 bedroom more than they require if they can still afford the rent to free up larger family housing.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal.

Please select one option.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

10 Under-Occupation in Other Circumstances

The Draft Allocations Scheme proposes:

The Council allows housing applicants to be offered a property larger than they would normally be considered to require if they are:

A long term Foster Carer (who has fostered children continuously for 3 years or more) or a housing applicant with a person in their household with high housing needs due to a health or disability, for example a child who cannot share with another due to their disability where they are still able to afford the rent.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal

Please select one option.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Household Size

To make the best use of the very limited family properties that become available each year in Oxford the Council is proposing changes to who can be “counted” as a household member for the purposes of assessing the size of property a housing applicant and the family will require.

11 The Council proposes that it no longer “counts” an unborn baby as a household member when assessing the number of bedrooms a housing applicant will require until the baby is born.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal

Please select one option.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

12 The Council proposes that it no longer “counts” adult children or household members for the purposes of assessing the size of property they will require and assessing their housing need where they are studying away from home and living elsewhere for part of the time in student, private rented or other accommodation.

&

There is not an over-riding health need for the adult child, or other adult resident, to live with the applicant and be included on their housing application as person requiring housing.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal

Please select one option.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Large Families

Only a very low number of four-bedroom properties or larger become available to let each year in Oxford. During 2012/13 it is expected that only around 10 four-bedroom properties will become available.

13 The draft Allocations Scheme proposes:

To allow applicants with a 4 bedroom housing need living in a 2 bedroom property (or smaller) or temporary homeless accommodation to apply for suitable 3 bedroom houses.

If an applicant opted to do this, then they would not normally be able to apply for a Transfer to another home within a year of moving in.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal

Please select one option.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

“Policy” Successors

Applicants living in social housing who are legally entitled to succeed to a tenancy after the previous tenant has passed away are referred to as “successors” in the Allocations Scheme and are placed in Band 1 if they are required to move to a smaller property. It is not proposed to change their priority.

Applicants living in social housing who are not legally entitled to succeed to a tenancy after the tenant of the property they are living in has passed away are referred to a “policy successors” and are placed in Band 1 if they meet the criteria within the existing Allocations Scheme.

14 The draft Allocations Scheme proposes that “policy successors” are restricted in future, to only include close family members that would have been entitled to succeed to the tenancy, if a succession had not already taken place. So more properties will be available to allocate to those in housing need on the housing register.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Choice-Based Lettings

The Council allocates most properties owned by the Council and other Registered Providers of social housing in Oxford through a Choice-Based Lettings scheme. Applicants on the Housing Register are able to express an interest in being offered a property by placing a bid through the Choice-Based Lettings Scheme for properties they are eligible to apply for. The property is normally offered to the applicant in the highest housing need who has bid for the property once the lettings cycle ends each fortnight.

Unreasonable Refusals

The majority of applicants accept the first offer they are made, however, some will refuse one or more offers. If an applicant's reasons for refusing are considered unreasonable there are limited actions that can be taken within the existing Allocations scheme. Unreasonable refusals can result in time and money being wasted and delays in other housing applicants being rehoused.

15 The Allocations Scheme proposes:

The Council will normally (with some exceptions) suspend a housing applicant on the General Register or Transfer List from bidding for properties for 12 months if they refuse two offers of accommodation without good reason in less than 12 months.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal.

Please select one option.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

16 Housing applicants on the homeless list will now only be made one suitable offer of accommodation.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal

Please select one option.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Sub-regional Allocations Scheme

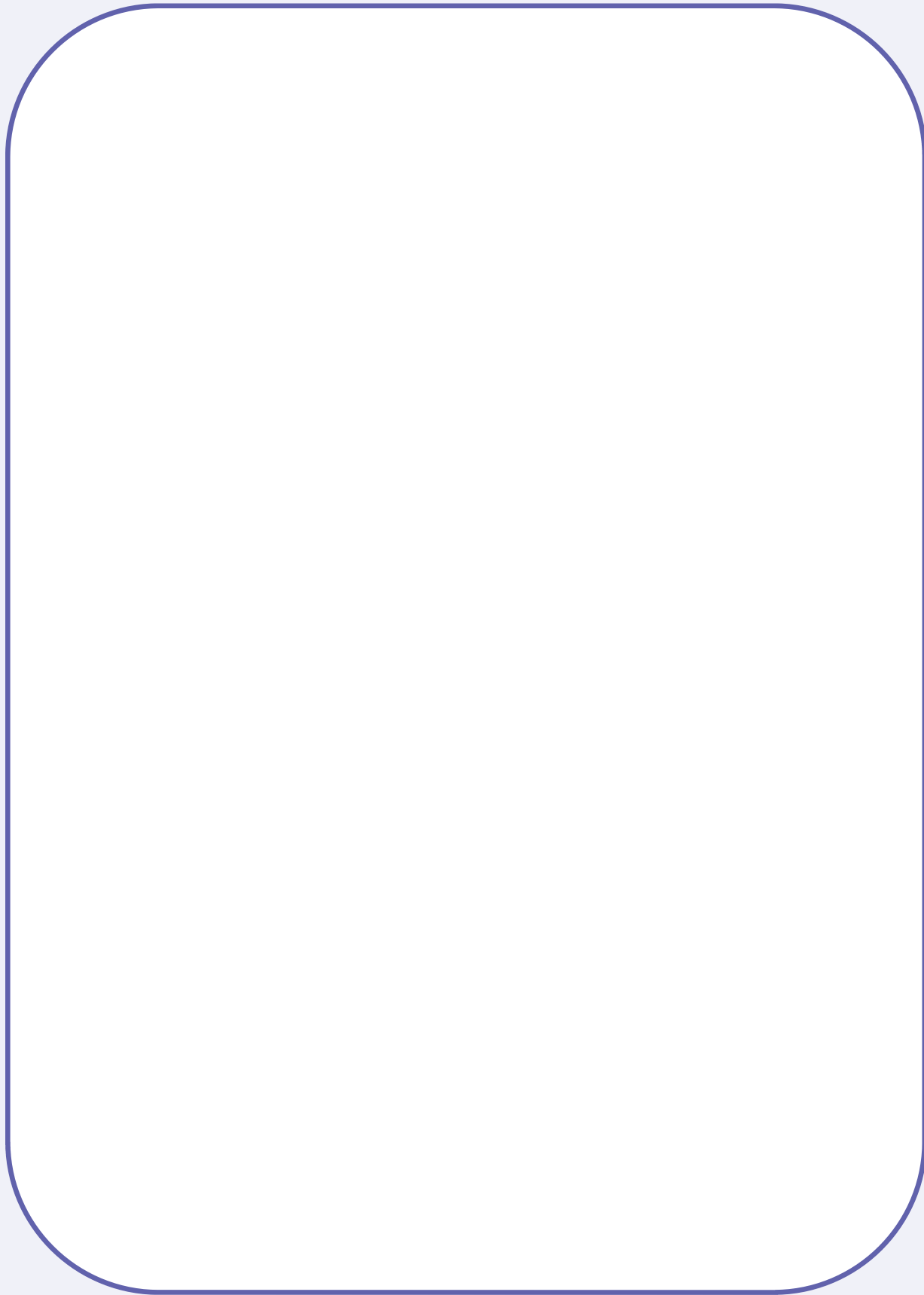
The Council is currently in a sub-regional partnership, with three other District Council's in Oxfordshire; Cherwell DC, Vale of the White Horse DC and South Oxfordshire DC. Due to the limited amount of properties becoming available across the sub-region there has also been less movement between the Districts than hoped when the scheme was originally set up

17 All four Councils are expected to have different Allocations Schemes in the future and are proposing to leave the Sub-Regional Scheme.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

18 Is there anything else you would like to add about the draft Allocations Scheme? *Please write your comments in the box.*

A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a dark blue border, intended for writing comments. The box is centered on the page and occupies most of the vertical space below the question.

Thank you for taking part in this questionnaire your opinion is really important to us. If you have any queries or comments please contact Tom Porter, Allocations Manager on:

01865 252713 or email : tporter@oxford.gov.uk

Please return your completed form to :

Housing Needs Freepost 10

Oxford City Council

Oxford

OX1 1BR

[There is no need for a stamp](#)

