



# **Housing Allocations Scheme**

**2022 – 2027**

Version 1

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If you would like this document in an accessible format, then please contact:

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## **SECTION ONE: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This is Epping Forest District Council's Housing Allocations Scheme ('the scheme') for determining priorities and for the procedures to be followed when allocating social housing within the District between 2022-2027.

The scheme was approved by Cabinet on 7 March 2022 and takes effect on 26 September 2022. It covers all aspects of the allocations process and replaces previous Housing Allocations Schemes for all current and future applications.

### **1.2 Fair access to social housing**

The demand for affordable rented housing in the District far outweighs the supply of social housing that becomes available every year.

The Council maintains a housing register of applicants who qualify and are eligible to be allocated social housing under the scheme.

We are committed to ensuring everyone has fair access to social housing. Every eligible applicant who makes a request to join the housing register shall be considered by the Council.

The policies described in the scheme shall be applied consistently to all applications to join the housing register unless otherwise stated. We shall offer assistance to applicants who may have difficulty applying without our support.

Applicants who in the Council's opinion have sufficient funds to enable them to meet their own housing costs (currently £76,000) shall not qualify to join the register. For joint applicants (or more) then their combined funds shall be considered.

### **1.3 Health and wellbeing**

Many people who approach the Council for help with housing also have concerns about their health and wellbeing or that of their families.

Although we cannot offer a settled home to everyone who approaches us, or even to those applicants in urgent housing need as quickly as we would like to, we aim to make every contact count towards improving the mental and physical health and wellbeing of residents.

As well as assessing individual application for housing we will also let applicants know what free opportunities are available to promote positive mental health, positive activities, and positive community initiatives for all residents as part of our road map toward levelling up.

### **1.4 Housing options**

We shall support applicants to choose and access the most suitable housing options and shall provide information and advice on the range of alternatives to joining the housing register including mutual exchange, low-cost home ownership, and accessing accommodation within the private rented sector.

We shall promote independent living for all applicants who are seeking assistance to meet their housing related support needs. Options shall include providing information and free advice about aids and adaptations, floating support, improved security, befriending, and mobility schemes.

## **1.5 Managing expectations**

The Council shall not accept applicants onto the housing register if it is evident that they have little or no prospect of being allocated accommodation. We consider this to be the fairest way of managing expectations.

## **1.6 Downsizing**

Existing social housing tenants who are under-occupying a property and want to downsize shall be actively supported to do so. For Council tenants this may include financial incentives and allowing tenants who want to give up a larger family sized home to move to a smaller property with one spare bedroom for guests etc.

## **1.7 Housing need**

The Council shall only allocate accommodation to people on the housing register in accordance with the scheme and shall give reasonable preference to specified categories of people based on their assessed need for affordable housing.

## **1.8 Social housing tenants**

Existing social housing tenants applying to Council for a transfer who are considered to have reasonable preference for an allocation shall be treated on the same basis as new applicants.

We shall very occasionally arrange a landlord management transfer for an existing Council tenant to alternative social housing outside of the scheme where we consider there is an emergency (or urgent) need to do so. Where the Council agrees the tenant meets the management transfer criteria, it does not need to apply the reasonable preference criteria.

## **1.9 Prioritising applications**

Qualifying applicants who have been accepted on to the scheme shall be placed in one of three priority bands.

Band A - Emergency Need, Band B - Urgent Need, Band C - Moderate Need

## **1.10 Choice**

The scheme aims to ensure that the accommodation offered meets the needs, circumstances, and wherever possible the preferences of the applicants and their households who are eligible and qualify to join the Housing Register.

The majority of allocations shall be via the Councils choice-based lettings scheme for properties that are advertised on the [HomeOption](#) website.

Housing staff can arrange assisted bidding for applicants on request if they would experience difficulty without this help.

As far as reasonably possible all applicants shall be offered:

- (a) a choice of housing accommodation; or
- (b) the opportunity to express preference about the housing accommodation to be allocated to them.

Some applicants may receive a direct offer of suitable accommodation or placed on the auto-bidding system depending on their assessed housing need and bidding history.



### **1.11 Preventing homelessness**

Everyone who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and approaches the Council for assistance under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 shall be encouraged to apply to join the housing register, providing they are eligible to do so.

The Council reserves the right to discharge its main homelessness duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to homeless households either by making an offer of settled social housing via the scheme, or by securing an offer of settled accommodation for at least six months in the private rented sector.

This option only applies to Part 7 offers to homeless households and shall be determined by the availability of suitable accommodation. An equivalent power does not apply for applicants that have been accepted onto the housing register under the provisions of Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996. All Part 6 allocations will be for social housing.

### **1.12 Best use of social housing**

In order to make the best use of all available housing the Council shall continue to work closely with a number of private registered providers (also known as housing associations) to secure nomination rights for the homes that they own and manage in the District.

Registered providers agree to work in partnership with the Council by advertising vacant properties through the choice-based lettings scheme and accepting nominations for vacant properties from applicants on the housing register under part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 in accordance with the scheme.

Similarly, registered providers assist the Council with discharging its main duty to homeless households under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 by accepting nominations for settled accommodation from homeless applicants on the housing register.

Registered providers shall also consider direct allocations for vacancies (including those both inside and outside of the scheme) in accordance with nominations agreements and all local lettings policies and plans.

### **1.13 Scope of the scheme**

An allocation of accommodation for the purpose of the scheme means:

- (a) selecting a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by the council
- (b) nominating a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by another housing authority
- (c) nominating a person to be an assured tenant of accommodation held by a private registered provider.

The scheme applies to the allocation of accommodation to existing secure or introductory tenants of the local housing authority and existing assured tenants of private registered providers only in the following circumstances:

- (a) the allocation involves a transfer
- (b) the application for transfer is made by the tenant; and
- (c) the housing authority is satisfied that the tenant is to be given reasonable preference

under the statutory framework.

The scheme **does** apply to the following:

- (d) existing tenants who occupy an adapted property and no longer require those adaptations, but the Council requires the property for an applicant who does need them; and existing tenants who are under-occupying their accommodation.

The scheme **does not** apply to the following:

- (a) mutual exchanges between secure tenants
- (b) mutual exchanges between secure and assured tenants, and those with flexible/fixed term tenancies
- (c) assignments
- (d) renewals/extensions of fixed term/flexible tenancies
- (e) transfers to existing tenants where the Council is satisfied that the tenant does not have reasonable preference
- (f) transfers to existing tenants that the Council initiates for management purposes, including temporary decants
- (g) conversion of introductory tenancies to secure tenancies
- (h) successions under section 89 of the Housing Act 1985
- (i) allocations to persons who lawfully occupy accommodation let on family intervention tenancies
- (j) provision of non-secure temporary accommodation in discharge of any homelessness duties or powers
- (k) transfer of tenancies by court order under family law or under the provision of the Civil Partnerships Act 2004
- (l) re-housing due to being displaced from previous accommodation by the Council or being re-housed by the Council pursuant to the Land Compensation Act 1973
- (m) temporary decants to allow property repairs to be carried out; and
- (n) accommodation based care and support extra care or residential care for vulnerable adults or children which shall fall under the remit of Essex County Council.

### **Local lettings plans**

Occasionally the Council may consider introducing local lettings policies and plans in response to specific issues such as local skill shortages, community cohesion and economic regeneration. Any recommendations will be subject to an equality impact assessment and Cabinet approval.

## **SECTION TWO: GENERAL DUTIES**

### **2.1 Housing allocations legislation and regulation**

This Housing Allocations Scheme has been developed to comply with the provisions of:

- (a) The Housing Act 1996 as amended
- (b) The Allocation of accommodation: Guidance for Local Authorities June 2012 last updated June 2022

### **2.2 Equality and diversity**

The Council is committed to upholding its public sector duties under the Equality Act 2010.

When making decisions we shall have due regard to:

- (a) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- (b) advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

The scheme takes into account the outcome of the public consultation and the equalities impact assessment that were undertaken and published on the Council's website as part of the review.

### **2.3 Privacy and information sharing**

Some or all of the information that an applicant provides is likely to be personal and sensitive and/or fall within special categories of data as defined under the General Data Protection Regulations and Data Protection Act 2018 and the Electronic Communications Act 2000.

The information that an applicant provides will be securely held by the Council and will only be accessed by authorised persons with the appropriate access controls.

Applicants shall be asked to sign a consent form as part of their housing application to enable the Council to share their information.

The Council will only use the information that an applicant has provided for the purpose set out in the scheme and will not use it for any other purpose, unless the applicant has given their consent, or this is otherwise required or permitted by law, for example if there is a safeguarding issue or in specific circumstances to prevent or detect crime.

Members of the public shall not be informed that a person is an applicant for an allocation of housing accommodation without the applicant's consent.

The Council is responsible for determining whether data sharing is lawful under UK data protection law, and this shall be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Applicants shall have the right under the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018 to see all information held regarding their application for housing.

Full details are available in the Councils [Privacy Policy](#).

Any questions or concerns about privacy should be directed to:

Data Protection Officer,  
Epping Forest District Council,  
Civic Offices, High Street,  
Epping,  
Essex,  
CM16 4BZ.  
(01992) 564180  
[dataprotection@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotection@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

## 2.4 Freedom of Information

The public has the right under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to see information on how the scheme has been prepared and approved by the Council.

Requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act must be made in writing via the Council's website, by email [foienquiries@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:foienquiries@eppingforestdc.gov.uk) or by post

Freedom of Information Officer  
Epping Forest District Council Civic Offices  
323 High Street  
Epping  
CM16 4BZ

Requests must state the applicants name and address for a response and describe the information requested.

## 2.5 Safeguarding

The Council has a duty to work together with other professionals and agencies in promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults with needs for care and support and safeguarding them from abuse and neglect.

- (a) Any concerns about the welfare of a child should be reported to [Essex Safeguarding Children Board](#).
- (b) Any concerns about the welfare of an adult, should be reported to [Essex Safeguarding Adults Board](#).
- (c) Full details of the Council's Safeguarding role and responsibilities are set out in our [Safeguarding Policy](#).

## 2.6 Prevention of fraud and false statements

Where an applicant provides false information in connection with their application and this subsequently comes to the Council's attention, the designated manager may reject the application on the grounds of fraud and/or arrange for further investigation including a referral to the Council's fraud team.

Any rejection from the housing register on the grounds of fraud may be treated as a permanent

exclusion (including subsequent applications from the same applicant) even if the application is made from a different address.

The applicant shall be advised of the terms of and the reasons for the exclusion and 'Fraudulent Information Provided' will be recorded on their casefile.

It is a criminal offence for any applicant and/or anyone providing supporting information to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement or knowingly to withhold reasonably requested information relevant to the housing application.

If there is evidence that a criminal offence has been committed, the Council may take proceedings that could result in a criminal record, a fine or imprisonment. The Council may also seek possession of any home obtained as a result of fraud.

## **2.7 Complaints**

If an applicant has requested a review of a decision and does not agree with the outcome or is dissatisfied with another aspect of the service they can inform the service or the Council's [Complaints officer](#) via the Council's website, by telephoning the Council's Contact Centre on 01992 564000 or in writing to:

Complaints Officer  
Contact Centre  
Civic Offices  
High Street  
Epping,  
Essex CM16 4BZ

The Council can investigate and put things right where necessary. Full details are available in the Council's [customer complaints policy](#)

If the applicant remains dissatisfied they can contact the [Local Government Ombudsman](#) or seek to challenge a decision via judicial review.

## **2.8 Local and national context**

A detailed list of associated local and national policies strategies regulation and legislation that provide the framework for this scheme are referenced at Appendix H

## **SECTION THREE: THE HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY**

### **3.1 Advice and assistance**

A choice-based lettings scheme typically requires housing applicants to be actively involved in seeking accommodation and the Council understands that some applicants may require help with this. We aim to ensure that no person is disadvantaged by the way the scheme operates.

Advice and information shall be made freely available about the right to make an application for housing; including the ability to request any necessary assistance when completing an application and expressing an interest in advertised properties, specifically for those applicants who would normally have difficulty in doing so without assistance.

Applicants shall also be given information to enable them to assess how long it is likely to be before accommodation appropriate to their needs may become available for allocation. The details shall be published on the HomeOption website and provided to applicants in an alternative accessible format on request at no charge.

### **3.2 Alternative housing options**

As there are likely to be many more applicants for social housing than properties available, the Council shall also provide information about other options, including but not limited to advice on:

- (a) aids and adaptations
- (b) security measures
- (c) renting in the private rented sector
- (d) available low-cost home ownership options
- (e) key worker housing schemes
- (f) mutual exchanges
- (g) floating support

### **3.3 Building resilience**

When people apply to the Council for help to find somewhere suitable and affordable to live, they or other members of their household may be experiencing a wide range of difficulties that are having, or could have, a serious effect on their health and wellbeing or that of their family.

We understand that for most applicants when they first register for housing their focus is to find out how the Council can help with their housing needs.

It is evident from the many applications that we receive each year that lots of households are struggling with social, emotional or health related issues such as loneliness, mental health difficulties, weight management, or beating an addiction.

Applicants are being encouraged to use the on-line housing registration process as an opportunity to have a look (in their own time if and when they want to) at the many free activities that are available across the District specifically designed to help establish positive mental health, positive activities, and positive community as part of our road map to levelling up the District.

Applicants can also ask staff for free confidential advice on what services are available and what may be suitable for them.

### **3.4 Choice-based letting**

The Council has adopted the HomeOption choice-based letting scheme which advertises available Council and housing association properties on-line and gives applicants on the housing register the opportunity to express an interest in suitable properties on the website. This is usually referred to as submitting a 'bid' to be considered for the property.

In general terms, the property shall be offered to the applicant in the highest band, who bids for the property and has been in that band for the longest time. Details on how the scheme operates shall be included in the letter that is sent out to applicants that are accepted onto the housing register.

### **3.5 Assisted bidding**

The Council can provide assisted bidding for applicants who need help and do not have the facilities or anyone else to support them. Housing staff can arrange the appropriate assistance on request in advance if required. With assisted bidding the applicant chooses which properties they would like to bid on and receives assistance to submit their bids. This may include choice based computer-generated bids.

### **3.6 Auto-bidding and direct offers**

Although the majority of applicants shall be allocated a property that they have self-selected via choice-based lettings the Council may from time to time arrange auto-bidding or make a direct offer of accommodation.

Auto-bidding can be set up to automatically generate bids for suitable properties based on the applicants assessed need. The applicant does not make the selection.

The Council may also directly offer a property to an applicant rather than selecting an applicant from bids or auto-bidding for advertised properties.

Auto-bidding and direct offers will only usually be considered where the applicant has been unsuccessful in their bidding – or if the applicant has not been bidding, and then usually only for the following categories of applicants;

#### **Band A – Emergency Housing Need:**

- (a) Households with an emergency need to move on medical, disability or welfare grounds as determined by the Council's Medical Officer,
- (b) Other emergency housing need situations where applicants are failing to bid on suitable properties, or it would be unreasonable to rely solely on waiting to secure something suitable via choice-based lettings.

#### **Band B – Urgent Housing Need:**

- (a) Households who are in temporary accommodation and the Council has accepted a main duty to house them under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.
- (b) Qualifying applicants who are ready to move on from supported housing
- (c) Other urgent housing need situations where it may be unreasonable to rely solely on waiting to secure something suitable via choice-based lettings.

\*Applicants who are or could be considered for auto-bidding or a direct offer are usually still expected to bid for suitable properties via HomeOption.

All auto-bidding arrangements and direct offers of accommodation shall be authorised by the designated manager.

If an applicant refuses an auto-bid or direct offer and exercises their right to request a statutory review as to the suitability of the offer then bidding and auto-bidding will be suspended whilst the review is taking place. If the review finds that the offer was unsuitable, the applicant shall be able to continue to bid until they are successful or have been made another direct offer of suitable accommodation.

### **3.7 Eligibility to join the housing register**

In considering applications to join the housing register the Council shall first ascertain whether an applicant is eligible for an allocation of accommodation; and if they qualify for an allocation of accommodation.

#### **Persons from abroad**

The Government sets the rules for which persons from abroad are eligible to join a Housing Register.

In general, persons from abroad who need leave to enter or remain in the UK will only be eligible under certain circumstances the current regulations are summarised at Appendix C.

The regulations are quite complex and subject to change by 'statutory instruments' and subject to amendment during the lifetime of the scheme.

The Council shall not allocate housing to an ineligible person by granting them a joint tenancy with another, eligible person.

The rules do not apply to an applicant who is already a secure or introductory tenant or an assured tenant of accommodation in which case the applicant can apply for a transfer regardless of their immigration status.

Any part of a household who is not a qualifying person shall be disregarded when assessing the need and size of accommodation.

The Council has also set some local criteria to determine who does and does not qualify to join the housing register.

### **3.8 Qualifying to join the housing register**

Applicants must qualify under each of the local eligibility criteria and must not be disqualified under any of the grounds listed at paragraph 3.12.

An applicant's eligibility or qualification to join the housing register shall be kept under review during the application process. Applicants who cease to be eligible and/or qualifying may be removed from the housing register at any time.

### **3.9 Local eligibility criteria**

#### **Age**

The housing register shall be open to applicants of 18 years and over.



### **3.10 Residency criteria**

To meet the residency criteria applicants are required to have lived in the District for seven continuous years or more immediately prior to the date of their application.

Any resident who moved out of the District for less than two years but has lived within the District for at least seven continuous years immediately prior to moving out of the District, shall be treated as an applicant who has lived in the District for more than seven continuous years prior to application.

### **3.11 Exceptions to the residency criteria**

The following exceptions to the seven-year residency criteria shall apply:

#### **3.11.1 Armed Forces**

Through the Military Covenant, the Government has made clear its responsibility to support the British Armed Forces in return for the important contribution they make to the country. Therefore, in accordance with the Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012, the Residency Criteria shall not apply to the following applicants;

Applicants who:

- (a) are serving in the regular forces and are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service
- (b) formerly served in the regular forces where the application is made within 5 years of discharge
- (c) are divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of service personnel who live in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence
- (d) have recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person's spouse or civil partner who has served in the regular forces and whose death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service; or
- (e) are serving or have served in the reserve forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service where the application is made within 5 years of discharge.

The "regular forces" and the "reserve forces" have the meanings given by section 374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006.

#### **3.11.2 Households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness**

Households who are owed a homelessness duty by the Council under Part 7 S193 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended:

- (a) who have already met the residency provisions in accordance with this legislation;
- (b) where there is a requirement to afford reasonable preference on the ground of homelessness, and
- (c) the Council does not owe a full homelessness duty.

#### **3.11.3 Applicants ready to move-on from supported housing**

Applicants who are leaving supported housing schemes where a lesser residency criterion of

2 years shall apply as set out at section 3.12.

#### **3.11.4 Victims of domestic abuse**

Applicants who are living in a refuge or other form of safe temporary accommodation in the District having escaped domestic abuse from within the District or from another local authority area.

#### **3.11.5 Social housing tenants with specific employment needs**

Applicants who are existing local authority or housing association tenants with a good tenancy record who are seeking to transfer from another local housing authority area in England.

They must provide appropriate evidence that they are in long-term work in the District or have a genuine intention of taking up an offer of work in the District (work does not including short-term, occasional, ancillary, voluntary, marginal or economically insignificant employment), comprising a minimum of 16 hours each week or an apprenticeship.

They must also demonstrate that they are experiencing hardship as a result of the above due to one or more of the following factors:

- (a) they live in excess of 50 miles from their current or intended place of work
- (b) they have a return journey time on public transport which is generally in excess of 3 hours based upon internet journey planners
- (c) the availability of transport is restrictive causing similar difficulties listed in (a) and (b) above
- (d) transport is unaffordable when taking into account earnings
- (e) there are medical and child-care factors which would be affected if the tenant could not move
- (f) the failure to move would result in the loss of an opportunity to improve an applicant's job prospects or in the opinion of the designated manager some other hardship factor not covered by the scheme

#### **3.11.6 Looked after children**

Where an applicant has been placed outside of the District by Essex County Council's Children Services Department, but Epping Forest District is the location they would normally live in, then they will be considered to fulfil the Residency criteria.

#### **3.11.7 Leaving secure accommodation**

Where an applicant has been moved to secure accommodation outside of the District for example due to detention in prison or in hospital under the Mental Health Act, then the applicant shall retain the local eligibility afforded immediately before their detention.

#### **3.11.8 Other exceptional circumstances**

Applicants who in the opinion of the designated manager are entitled to a reasonable preference under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended and can demonstrate an exceptional need to either leave their current local authority's area or move to the Epping Forest District to escape violence or harm.

### **3.12 Non-qualifying applicants**

Every application shall be assessed on its own merits. Any applicant rejected as ineligible or non-qualifying shall be provided with a written explanation by the designated officer giving

clear grounds for the decision, based on the relevant facts. The applicant shall have the right to request a review of the decision.

The following grounds shall disqualify an applicant from joining the Housing Register:

**3.12.1 Housing need**

Any applicant who does not have an assessed housing need, as listed within at least one of the priority Bands criteria detailed at Section 7 of the scheme shall not qualify.

**3.12.2 Financial resources**

Any applicant(s) who, in the opinion of the Council, has sufficient funds either individually or collectively to enable them to meet their housing costs shall not qualify. At present the total upper threshold is set at £76,000.

Total income and assets shall be determined by calculating the total combined annual gross taxable income added to any residential property equity, savings, shares or any other assets. All applicants shall be required to provide evidence of income and capital.

Where the designated manager is satisfied with the evidence that applicant(s) has disposed of assets by means of wilful deception within the six years directly prior to making the application the applicant shall be disqualified.

Any lump sums received, as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service by either, members of the Armed Forces, former Service personnel, bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Regular Forces, or serving or former members of the Reserve Forces, shall be disregarded from the calculation.

**3.12.3 Deliberately worsening housing circumstances**

Any applicant who in the view of the designated manager is found to have deliberately worsened their circumstances in order to qualify to join the housing register shall be disqualified. Examples include but are not limited to:

- (a) selling a property that is affordable and suitable for the applicant's needs
- (b) moving from a secure tenancy or settled accommodation to insecure or less settled or overcrowded accommodation
- (c) requesting or colluding with a landlord or family member to issue them with a Notice to Quit; or
- (d) deliberately overcrowding a property by moving in friends and/or other family members who have never lived together with the applicant previously, and who then request rehousing to larger accommodation.

**3.12.4 Serious unacceptable behaviour**

The Council may decide that an applicant is ineligible for social housing if it is satisfied that:

- (a) they, or a member of their household, has been found to be responsible for unacceptable behaviour (such as non-payment of rent, causing a nuisance or annoyance, or domestic violence/ abuse, harassment, threats of harassment, or violence) serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant of the Council; and at the time their application is considered, they are unsuitable to be a tenant of the Council by reason of that behaviour.

Acts of violence and aggression to employees will not be tolerated by the Council and any applicant who threatens or uses violence towards any Council employee or contractor will be

removed from the housing register immediately.

### 3.12.5 **Rent arrears**

Applicants with rent arrears shall be disqualified from joining the housing register if they wilfully and persistently fail to pay their rent and show disregard for advice and assistance to address the arrears where it would be reasonable to expect them to do so (e.g., the behaviour is not attributable to an underlying vulnerability). The individual circumstances shall be considered in every case and a proportionate risk-based assessment shall be taken to whether the applicant should be disqualified from:

- (a) joining the register; or
- (b) being considered for a property if they are already on the register.

Generally, applicants are unlikely to be disqualified if they can evidence that:

- (a) they have made an arrangement with the landlord to pay the arrears, kept to the arrangement for at least three months are continuing to make the payments and give an undertaking to continue to pay the debt if they are rehoused
- (b) the arrears accrued due to an unavoidable life event for example health reasons, a period of unemployment, furlough, caring responsibilities or other crisis, and reasonable measures have been and/or are being taken to address the debt and the underlying cause where possible for example debt counselling
- (c) the arrears accrued as a result of third-party financial abuse or deception
- (d) the applicant has been granted a mental health breathing space or a standard breathing space under the national debt respite scheme and the appropriate support plans are in place or being pursued to ensure a longer terms solution
- (e) the arrears amount to less than 1/12 of the annual rental charge.

Where appropriate applicants shall be invited to consider pursuing free local support as part of levelling up for the District.

### 3.12.6 **Future applications**

If a non-qualifying applicant considers that he/she should be treated as a qualifying person in the future, they may make a fresh application at that time.

## 3.13 **Reasonable preference**

The Council shall give reasonable preference to specific categories of people when prioritising applicants on the housing register in accordance with Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended.

Reasonable preference shall be given to applicants:

- (i) who are homeless within the meaning of Part 7 of the Housing Act (including those who are intentionally homeless and those not in priority need)
- (ii) who are owed a particular statutory duty by any local housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2) or s195(2) of the 1996 Act or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under section 192(3)
- (iii) occupying unsanitary, overcrowded or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing

- (iv) who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to a disability); and
- (v) who need to move to a particular locality within the District; where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others).

### **3.14 Determining priority**

The Council shall determine priority between applicants with reasonable preference by:

- (a) assessing the level of housing need and categorising it as either Emergency, Urgent or Moderate; and
- (b) prioritising bids from or making direct offers to applicants who have been in the highest band for the longest time.

### **3.15 Under-occupation and downsizing**

The Council shall prioritise and support qualifying Council tenants and qualifying Housing Association tenants who are under occupying their current home and want to downsize into smaller accommodation.

Qualifying Council tenants with one or more spare bedroom(s) will be offered additional incentives to consider transferring or mutually exchanging into a smaller property.

Qualifying Council tenants in general needs accommodation will be offered additional incentives to consider moving to sheltered housing.

The incentives shall usually apply to lifetime Council tenants and secure fixed term Council tenants with more than six months remaining on their tenancy who wish to transfer (or mutual exchange) to smaller general needs accommodation or to sheltered housing.

### **3.16 Incentives to downsize**

#### **3.16.1 Financial incentives**

The financial incentive shall usually include an offer of £500 to cover removal costs a payment of £500 to meet decoration costs (in addition to the amount paid under the Council's decorations allowance scheme) and £1,000 for each bedroom 'released' (or £500 if moving from a 3-bed to a 2-bed with a 1-bed need) up to a maximum payment of £4,000, subject to the tenant having a housing need for the downsized property.

The incentive payments made to existing tenants who downsize accommodation shall also apply to any Epping Forest District Council tenant who downsizes accommodation by way of mutual exchange, providing all parties to the mutual exchange are Epping Forest District Council tenants and will result in all parties being adequately housed in accordance with the scheme.

If a Council tenant is moving from general needs accommodation to sheltered housing then they shall receive an additional 'bonus' payment of £1,000 regardless of whether they are giving up any bedrooms or the number of bedrooms they are giving up.

If a Council tenant owes arrears of rent in their accommodation then the amount owed to the Council shall be deducted from the amount of incentive paid.

### 3.16.2 **Size and type of offer**

A lifetime tenant of the Council or a fixed term tenant with more than six months left on their fixed term tenancy wishing to downsize where they are giving up one or more bedrooms usually have the option of being considered for:

- (a) a property of the right size and type based on their needs (Appendix A) or
- (b) a property of the right size and type and one spare bedroom (Appendix B)  
(e.g., a couple, or single person can move from a 3-bedroom house to a 2-bedroom flat or a 1- bedroom flat) either with or without a garden.

### 3.16.3 **Exceptions to incentives**

The incentives do not apply to applicants who have been awarded Band A due to an emergency need to move (Section 7 points i-v).

A qualifying housing association tenant who wishes to downsize shall be awarded Band A although they will not be considered for the additional incentives

Where a Council tenant is releasing a 3-bedroom property and needs a 1-bedroom property, but opts for a 2-bedroom property, then the incentive payment shall be reduced from £1,000 to £500 given the demand for 2-bedroom properties.

Where a tenant of the Council is downsizing accommodation, they can choose to be considered for a bungalow provided they are over 50 years of age.

The financial threshold to join the housing register (currently £76,000 Section 3.12.2) shall be disregarded where a Council tenant is under-occupying accommodation and moves or enters into a mutual exchange to any property with fewer bedrooms than their current property and both properties are owned by the Council.

If the household income exceeds the usual upper threshold to join the housing register and section 3.12.2 has been disregarded then the Council's incentive payment shall not be made.

### 3.17 **Insanitary, overcrowded housing or unsatisfactory conditions**

The definition of insanitary, overcrowded, or unsatisfactory conditions for the purpose of the scheme is:

- (a) Where the permitted number, in accordance with the provisions of S.326 of the Housing Act 1985 is exceeded, or
- (b) in accordance with the legislation, the property is in a serious state of disrepair, of poor internal or external arrangement, or
- (c) is lacking one or more of the following: kitchen facilities, inside W.C. or utility supplies.

### 3.18 **Medical and welfare needs**

The Housing Act 1996 states that reasonable preference on the housing register should be given to applicants who have a need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to a disability and access needs and/or learning disability).

The medical and welfare category includes applicants, or members of the applicant's household, whose health is being affected by their current property, and where a move to another more suitable property would alleviate their condition or make it easier to manage.

### **3.19 Medical grounds (including disability)**

Where it appears that there is a need to make enquiries into an applicant's medical condition, the designated officer shall refer the case to the Council's medical advisor or a company commissioned by the Council to provide medical advice on written evidence, taking into account all known facts relating to the application.

It is important to note that reasonable preference shall not be awarded based upon the medical condition itself, rather upon the impact the condition has upon the applicant's housing requirements and whether the applicant's current accommodation is directly contributing to the deterioration of the applicant's health.

Both reasonable preference and the associated priority awarded shall take into account the extent to which the medical advisor considers alternative accommodation will assist with stabilising or improving the condition and the urgency with which alternative accommodation is required. The applicant can provide their own medical evidence if appropriate along with a medical/welfare assessment form, which will be sent to the Council's medical advisor.

If in the opinion of the medical advisor reasonable preference should be granted, then they shall recommend that the application is awarded one of the three following priorities :

#### **3.19.1 Emergency medical need**

Where it can be demonstrated that, due to an illness or disability, it would be unacceptable for the applicant to remain in their current dwelling.

##### **Urgent medical need**

Where it can be demonstrated that - due to a serious or chronic illness or disability - the health of and therefore quality of life of an applicant (or member of their household) is; significantly affected by their current dwelling; and is likely to significantly improve (or any deterioration is likely to stabilise or slow down significantly) if they move.

##### **Moderate medical need**

Where it can be demonstrated that due to an illness or disability the applicant finds living in their current dwelling difficult and it is clear that remaining in that dwelling would contribute to deterioration in their health; or it would be beneficial for the applicant to move to alternative accommodation but, at present, the applicant can manage in their present dwelling.

The medical advisor shall also recommend the type of property most appropriate to the household's medical needs.

The medical award shall be taken into account by the designated officer when assessing the application. Where two or more members of a household have a medical need then the level of priority awarded shall be related to the household member with the greatest medical need.

##### **Reassessment of medical need**

Any applicant who is awarded Band A on medical grounds and refuses a suitable offer of a property for which they have submitted a bid, or have been offered as a result of auto-bidding, or received a direct offer as appropriate, shall have their application cancelled. They can reapply and their medical need shall be reassessed. If following reassessment their circumstances still warrant Band A, then their priority date will be the date of the new application.

Any applicant who is awarded Band B on medical grounds and refuses two suitable offers of properties for which they have submitted bids, or have been offered as a result of auto-bidding, or received a direct offer as appropriate, shall have their application cancelled. They can reapply and their medical need shall be reassessed. If following reassessment their circumstances still warrant Band B, then their priority date will be the date of the new application.

A re-assessment shall also be required if an applicant fails to fully participate in the choice-based letting scheme for more than 12 months.

If an applicant with reasonable preference on medical grounds moves from their existing accommodation but remains on the register, then they shall require a new medical assessment.

### **3.20 Welfare grounds**

Welfare grounds shall be assessed on written evidence by the designated manager in consultation with the Council's medical advisor.

Welfare issues shall encompass:

- (a) providing or receiving ongoing care and care and support needs for those who could not be expected to find their own accommodation such as young adults with a learning disability who wish to live independently in the community; and
- (b) social needs, for instance, where a secure base is required for a care-leaver or any other vulnerable person to build a stable life.

Those who are active foster-carers or those who are adopting who need to secure larger accommodation in order to look after a child who was previously looked after by local authority will be considered for a Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy (in accordance with the Council's Tenancy Policy) where additional priority is justified.

### **3.21 Hardship grounds**

Hardship grounds shall be assessed on written evidence by the designated manager in consultation with the Council's medical advisor.

Hardship may include a need to move to give or receive care that is substantial or ongoing as well as for access to specialist medical treatment where there are severe mental health issues and/or, medical or welfare issues and there are exceptional reasons why this support cannot be made available through a reliance on public transport or on the applicant's own transport.

### **3.22 Move on from supported housing**

In respect of applicants placed in supported housing by the Council under its nomination rights, or with the support of the Homelessness Team for at least 9 months, and to whom the Council does not owe the full homelessness duty, who are ready to move on from supported housing, a lesser residency criterion of 2 years shall apply.

Applicants shall be made one offer of suitable accommodation at the end of their stay in supported housing, for which they have submitted a bid, or been offered as a result of auto-bidding, or received a direct offer as appropriate.

The Council shall offer applicants who are moving on from supported housing a 10-year Secure (fixed term) Tenancy. If the applicant refuses a suitable offer then they will be



required to leave the supported housing.

### **3.23 Sheltered housing supplementary waiting list**

The Council operates a separate Supplementary Waiting List for applicants over 60 years of age who do not meet certain aspects of the Local Eligibility Criteria.

Applicants shall generally only be able to bid on studio or one-bedroom Council or Housing Association properties in sheltered accommodation or grouped dwelling schemes (not bungalows) for older people under the HomeOption Scheme. However, qualifying persons on the Council's housing register who have submitted bids shall be given priority.

Any offers of tenancies made to applicants on the supplementary waiting list shall be prioritised in registration date order.

Prior to any offer, the Council shall undertake an in-depth assessment of the applicant's circumstances to determine if the accommodation is suitable for the applicant. The following criteria shall still apply when determining whether the applicant is eligible for inclusion on the supplementary waiting list:

- (a) Prevention of fraud and false statements (section 2.6)
- (b) Persons from abroad (section 3.7)
- (c) Non-qualifying applicants (section 3.12); and
- (d) Property size and type offered (Appendix A).

## **SECTION FOUR: LOCAL LETTINGS PLANS**

### **4.1 Local lettings plans**

Occasionally the Council may propose local lettings plan to allocate particular accommodation to applicants of a particular description (whether or not they fall within the reasonable preference categories listed under section 3.13) in an area that has specific issues, in order to promote stable, settled, safe communities.

The need for the plan shall be clearly defined in relation to the area, the type of property and affected applicants or potential applicants.

An Equalities Impact Assessment shall be conducted and explicit reference shall be made to how the community will benefit from the proposal. The decision whether to introduce a local lettings plan shall be subject to Cabinet approval and shall not affect overall compliance with the requirements of the scheme.

Examples may include but are not limited to:

- (a) Lettings on a specific development to key workers where a shortage of other available affordable housing in the locality is having a serious impact on the ability of a particular statutory service to recruit and retain essential staff.
- (b) Temporarily halting allocations to vulnerable applicants in specific localities with social issues that are likely to leave them open to exploitation, whilst the Community Safety Partnership tackles the issues.
- (c) Restricting the allocation of high-density housing developments with minimal green

space (such as commercial premises with permitted development rights) to households without young children.

Local Lettings Plans shall be kept under periodic review to determine whether they are fulfilling the need for which they were originally intended and are still required.

## **SECTION FIVE: THE HOUSING REGISTER**

### **5.1 Applying to join the housing register**

Applicants are required to complete the on-line application form at [HomeOption](#) and submit the relevant supporting documents by the means specified on the application form.

Applicants who require advice or assistance can

Email [rehousing@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:rehousing@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

Telephone 01992 564716

Visit The Community Hub Civic Offices  
323 High Street Epping  
CM16 4BZ

### **5.2 Applications from Members of the Council, staff, or their relatives**

Any housing applicant (including existing council tenants) must tell the Council when they apply to join the housing register if they are:

- (a) an elected member of the Council: or
- (b) a Council employee: or
- (c) related to any of the above
- (d) partner of any of the above
- (e) living with any of the above

The application from any of the above shall be flagged on the Council's computer system to show their status.

Where an applicant fails to disclose the above information and this subsequently comes to the Council's attention, the housing application may be suspended or cancelled, as determined by the designated manager.

### **5.3 Application forms**

Application forms shall only be accepted by the Council as complete once all correct and relevant information and supporting documents have been received and verified.

### **5.4 Supporting information**

An application shall not be progressed until applicants provide the necessary information. If the information is not supplied within the specified timescales (typically 14 days) then the application shall usually be cancelled, and the applicants advised to reapply at a later stage when they are able to provide the necessary details in the required format.

However, if the applicants have made a homelessness application to the Council under Part

7 of the Housing Act 1996, then their application to join the housing register shall still be processed. It will only be cancelled if the Council subsequently decides that no duty is owed to the applicants under the homelessness legislation, and the applicants fail to provide all of the relevant supporting documentation.

## **5.5 Proof of identity**

Applicants and other members of the household shall, at the point of application, be required to provide documentary proof from two official sources of;

- (a) their identity; and
- (b) their residency.

Applicants shall be required to provide an original full birth certificate, a current passport and any other appropriate documents as determined by the designated manager.

If there is a valid reason why the required documents cannot be provided, then the designated manager may agree to accept alternative forms of evidence.

## **5.6 Proof of residency**

Applicants shall be required to provide satisfactory evidence of residency. The Council reserves the right to validate the residency of the applicants and other members of the household by seeking information from other Council services and relevant statutory bodies as appropriate.

Eligibility may be reviewed before or when an applicant is considered for an offer of a particular property and the evidence required may be more extensive than was requested at the point of being accepted onto the register.

Usually, if an applicant fails to provide the required evidence, then they will not be offered the property.

## **5.7 Registration date**

The registration date shall be the date that a fully completed application is received by the Council.

## **5.8 Households**

For the purpose of the scheme a household means an applicant and any other person who usually live with the applicant as a member of their family, or someone who might reasonably be expected to reside with them.

## **5.9 Residence and contact with children**

Where applicants have children subject to residence and contact issues, the Council shall usually consider the children as permanent household members of the partner with the primary residence and control of the child/children. Where the other partner applies to join the register, it will not always be possible to consider the child/children as part of their household.

Documentary evidence detailing residence and contact arrangements such as a court order or solicitor's letter, and who receives the Child Benefit will be required to determine the property size that applicants will be considered for.

## **5.10 Change of circumstances**

Applicants shall be required to report any change in circumstances that may affect their application by completing an online Change of Circumstances form and uploading the appropriate supporting documents as soon as is reasonably possible.

The onus shall be on the applicant to inform the Council when there is a change in their circumstances that may affect their application.

The designated officer shall inform the applicant in writing whether the change in circumstances affects the status of their application or priority status within 10 working days of receiving the details of the change in circumstances.

Where an applicant's change in circumstances results in a higher priority Band being awarded to their application then the date of moving to the higher Band shall become the priority order date for consideration within that Band.

## **5.11 Offers and refusals**

### **5.11.1 Band A emergency need**

With the exception of downsizers, applicants in Band A who refuse one offer of suitable accommodation for which they have submitted a bid, or been offered as a result of auto-bidding, or received a direct offer as appropriate, shall have their application cancelled. Cancelled applicants will be able to re-apply and their application will be assessed on their current circumstances. If accepted, they will receive a new registration date and may be awarded a different priority.

### **5.11.2 Band A downsizers**

If it becomes apparent that an applicant wishing to downsize continually places bids and then refuses suitable offers and in the opinion of the designated manager it is placing a disproportionate burden on the service, then the downsizer may be suspended from bidding for six months. The Council is keen to encourage downsizing, however administering refusals of suitable offers causes delays for other applicants waiting to move.

### **5.11.3 Band B main homelessness duty**

Applicants in Band B who are owed a main housing duty under part 7 of the Housing Act and who refuse one offer of suitable accommodation for which they have submitted a bid, or been offered as a result of auto-bidding, or received a direct offer in discharge of the duty shall have their application cancelled.

### **5.11.4 Band B move on from supported housing**

Applicants in Band B who qualify for a move from supported housing who refuse one offer of suitable accommodation for which they have submitted a bid via the choice-based letting scheme or been offered as a result of auto-bidding or received a direct offer as appropriate shall have their application cancelled.

### **5.11.5 Band B urgent need**

With the exception of Homeless households to whom the Council has a main housing duty, or applicants who are ready to move on from supported housing, all other Band B applicants who refuse two offers of suitable accommodation for which they have submitted a bid, or been offered as a result of auto-bidding, or received a direct offer as appropriate shall have their application cancelled.

#### 5.11.6 **Band C moderate need**

Band C applicants who refuse two offers of suitable accommodation for which they have submitted a bid, or been offered as a result of auto-bidding, or received a direct offer as appropriate shall have their application cancelled.

### **SECTION SIX : DECISIONS AND REVIEWS**

#### **6.1 Decisions**

Applicants shall be notified of all decisions in writing, or other formats on request. All correspondence notifying applicants of ineligibility or non-qualification for joining the register, or about the Band that they have been awarded, or about any other decision concerning the facts of their case, shall state that they have a right to request a review of the decision. It will set out how to request a review and give applicants the opportunity to have the information explained to them verbally.

#### **6.2 Right of review**

If an applicant considers they have been unfairly or unreasonably treated having regard to the provisions of the scheme, they shall have 21 days of the date of the original decision letter within which to exercise their right to request a review.

In the first instance, applicants shall be required to seek a review by either writing to the designated manager, or by notifying the designated team by any convenient method and shall receive a written response within 8 weeks of the date the request is received. Upon request, the decision letter may be collected by the applicant within a reasonable period. If it is necessary to extend the deadline, then the applicant shall be notified of the extension and the reasons for doing so.

The review shall be undertaken by the designated officer or manager who shall inform the applicant of any further rights of appeal as appropriate.

The review shall be undertaken by a person senior to the person making the original decision and who has had no significant involvement in the original decision.

In cases where the Council considers that an applicant may have difficulty in understanding the implications of a decision on ineligibility or disqualification, then the designated officer shall make arrangements for the information to be explained to the applicant verbally.

#### **6.3 Monitoring and review of applications**

Applicants shall not be required to annually re-register after first applying to join the housing register, although they will be required to inform the Council of any changes in their circumstances, which may affect their housing application and result in the Council reviewing their application.

The Council may monitor the bidding patterns of applicants. In addition to the clauses at section 5.11, if an applicant in any Band fails to submit a bid for 12 months or longer then the Council may cancel their application.

The Council shall inform the applicant of the decision in writing. The letter shall also advise the applicant that they can request a statutory review of the decision.

All applicants will have already been informed of this condition in the confirmation letter that they received when their application was originally accepted.

**SECTION SEVEN: PRIORITY BANDS**

**7. Band A: Emergency Band B: Urgent Band C: Moderate**

**BAND A Emergency Need**

Band A – Emergency Need Criteria	
i	Any member of the Armed Forces, or former Service personnel, or serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who joins the Council’s housing register, where they are assessed by the Council’s medical advisor as suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service, where the application is made within 5 years of discharge are given priority above all other applicants within Band A.
ii	Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the Regular Forces where the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their spouse or civil partner and the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service.
iii	Applicants with an assessed need to move on emergency medical grounds or emergency grounds relating to disability.
iv	Applicants with an assessed need to move on emergency welfare grounds.
v	On the recommendation of the Councils medical advisor applicants with specific accommodation requirements will be given priority for suitable properties as they become available above other applicants in the Band (e.g., adapted or ground floor properties etc.) regardless of the date they joined the Band.
vi	Applicants with a Council or housing association tenancy in the District wanting to move to accommodation with fewer bedrooms than the property they currently occupy.

**BAND B Urgent Need**

Band B – Urgent Need Criteria	
i	Applicants occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing which poses a serious health hazard, or otherwise living in unsatisfactory conditions (in accordance with housing legislation) but not as a result of the introduction of a further household.
ii	Applicants with an assessed need to move on urgent medical grounds or urgent grounds relating to disability, including learning disabilities.
iii	Applicants with an assessed need to move on urgent welfare grounds.
iv	Applicants needing two or more additional bedrooms compared to their current accommodation.
v	Applicants who can demonstrate they would otherwise be one household but are having to live apart from other members of their household because of a lack of accommodation, which would lead to statutory overcrowding if they occupied accommodation available to them individually but not for other personal reasons (i.e., family disputes).
vi	Applicants with an assessed need to move to a particular locality within the District where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or to others.
vii	Applicants who have an agreed fostering or adoption agreement in place with Essex County Council, who need to move to a larger home in order to accommodate a looked after child. Special guardians, holders of a residence order, and family and friend carers who are not foster carers but who have taken on the care of a child because the parents are unable to provide care shall also be included in this category.

viii	Applicants accepted by the Council as being statutorily homeless and owed the main housing duty under section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).
ix	Existing tenants living in sheltered accommodation, who are wishing to move to alternative sheltered accommodation within their own scheme or to another sheltered scheme within the District (including sheltered bungalows).
x	Existing tenants of the Council aged over 60 years, living in 1-bedroom Council accommodation wishing to move to sheltered accommodation regardless of their need (including sheltered bungalows).
xi	Applicants who the Council has placed into supported housing (after a period of at least 9 months) if they are ready to move on and the Council does not owe a main homelessness duty.

### **BAND C Moderate Need**

<b>Band C – Moderate Need Criteria</b>	
i	Any member of the Armed Forces or former Service personnel or serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who have no housing need, and the application is made within 5 years of discharge.
ii	Spouses and children (including stepchildren) of existing and former Armed Forces personnel (where the application is made within 5 years of discharge) seeking accommodation in their own right, provided that one of their family members (as defined by Section 113 of the Housing Act 1985) has lived within the District for at least 3 years immediately prior to the date of application.
iii	Applicants with an assessed need to move on moderate medical grounds or moderate grounds relating to disability.
iv	Applicants with an assessed need to move on moderate welfare grounds.
v	Applicants needing one additional bedroom compared to their current accommodation.
vi	Applicants defined as a household, who are sharing accommodation with another household.
vii	Applicants with an assessed need to move to be nearer to their place of work or to take up an offer of permanent employment or an apprenticeship.
viii	Applicants placed in interim accommodation by the Council awaiting their homelessness decision under S.184 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended.
ix	Applicants to whom the Council does not owe a full homelessness duty, where there is a requirement under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended to afford reasonable preference on the ground of homelessness.
x	Applicants who are entitled to a reasonable preference under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended and can demonstrate an exceptional need to either leave their current local authority's area or move to the Epping Forest District.

## **SECTION EIGHT: ALLOCATIONS & NOMINATIONS**

### **8.1 Social housing providers**

The statutory register of social housing providers includes local authority providers and private non-profit and profit-making registered providers. Most private non-profit providers are also known as housing associations.

The scheme operates in accordance with section 170 of the Housing Act 1996. At the Council's request, private registered providers with social rented housing stock in the District have a duty to co-operate to such extent as is reasonable in the circumstances in offering accommodation to people with priority under the scheme.

### **8.2 Nominations agreements**

The Council and those private registered providers with stock in the District shall have formal agreements in place to ensure that a negotiated percentage of lettings shall go to applicants on the housing register.

The District's private registered provider partners shall participate in the Council's choice-based letting scheme and advertise their properties through HomeOption.

All nominations to private registered providers shall be prioritised in accordance with the scheme.

### **8.3 Available properties**

It is essential that void (empty) properties are let quickly and without unnecessary delay. Void properties affect the Council in terms of a loss of rental income, the continuing provision of temporary accommodation for homeless families, the possible deterioration of the property, increased risks of squatting and vandalism, and a poor public image.

### **8.4 Advertising available properties**

The type of properties that are advertised are likely to vary (sometimes considerably) from week to week, depending on what becomes available.

Adverts may include Council and private registered provider properties for social rent or affordable rent.

### **8.5 Other affordable housing**

The Council may also provide links to schemes advertising other types of affordable housing in the locality that applicants may wish to consider, including key worker schemes, help to buy, mutual exchange and private rented accommodation.

### **8.6 The bidding and nominations process**

Eligible applicants can make bids for properties up until the advertised deadline for that bidding round. Bids can be made online via the website, or at the Community Hub at the Civic offices.

Full details of the bidding process are available on the HomeOption website.



Bids that are received after the advertised deadline shall not usually be considered other than at the discretion of a designated officer or manager.

Applicants can bid for up to 3 affordable properties each bidding cycle. Bids can be cancelled and reassigned to other properties if desired.

All bids shall be checked by the Rehousing Team against the eligibility criteria. Ineligible bids shall be excluded from consideration by the designated manager. As far as possible the Council shall use the Banding system and waiting time within the Band to allocate accommodation in accordance with Section 7 of the scheme.

## **8.7 Restrictive labelling**

Restrictive labelling of properties through HomeOption may be applied to ensure that the Council meets its statutory obligations and to help achieve the intended outcomes of the scheme, the District's Housing Strategy, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Tenancy Strategy.

Restrictive labelling may also be applied to the allocation of sheltered housing or to properties that have adaptations to meet the needs of elderly, or vulnerable or disabled applicants.

On occasion, the Council may choose not to advertise a property through the choice-based letting scheme and offer the property as a direct offer. This may be due to the serious nature and needs of an applicant, or as part of the Council's effort to reduce the amount of time that homeless households spend in temporary accommodation or for applicants who are ready to move on from supported housing. The details of individual direct offers shall remain confidential, in order to protect the applicant.

## **8.8 Viewings**

The Council may arrange multiple viewings for some properties (i.e., inviting more than one applicant to view a property) and anticipates that all partner agencies shall follow a multiple viewing framework. All invited applicants shall be required to bring proof of their identity and original documentation for verification.

The applicants with the highest priority may be required to sign for the property immediately. At the point of sign-up, the successful applicant's photograph and National Insurance number shall be taken as further verification of their identity.

All applicants who have been allocated an Epping Forest District Council tenancy through HomeOption shall be encouraged to attend an appropriate tenancy and/or money advice workshop depending on the availability at the point of allocation.

All Council properties shall be let to the agreed lettable standard, and a copy of the standard shall be included with the offer letter.

## **8.9 Withdrawal of an offer**

An offer may be withdrawn prior to the tenancy being signed, where:

- (a) the applicant has made a false declaration, or failed to provide up to date information which substantially altered their eligibility for the property offered
- (b) the information available at the time of offer about the vacant property was incorrect, and it is subsequently discovered that the size and type is no longer suitable to the

applicant's needs

- (c) incorrect information on the applicant's computer records substantially alters the applicant's qualification to join the housing register and/or their priority status
- (d) the property was offered prior to being ready to let and there are significant delays to the date that the property is likely to be available for the applicant to move in to.

#### **8.10 Feedback on let properties**

All properties that have been let through HomeOption shall be listed on the HomeOption website showing the number of bidders for each property, and the profile of the successful bidder including their Band, and date of registration.

### **SECTION NINE: ALLOCATIONS OUTSIDE OF THE SCHEME**

Allocations may be made outside of the Allocations Scheme in the following circumstances:

#### **9.1 Management transfers**

Where the Council arranges a landlord transfer for Council tenants due to housing management issues, it is known as a management transfer.

Although a Council tenant can request a management transfer, it falls outside the rules of Part 6 because it is treated as a transfer that is initiated by the Council as the landlord.

In practice a management transfer is rarely offered as it shall only be used where no other housing solution is possible.

The tenant shall usually receive a single direct offer of the next suitable property with a comparable number of rooms that becomes available. (A separate offer policy applies for temporary and permanent decants due to major works or regeneration)

#### **Grounds for a management transfer**

The Council may offer a management transfer because they require the tenant to move, or the tenant needs to move urgently due to, for example:

- (a) domestic abuse
- (b) violence, harassment, intimidation, or threats of violence likely to be carried out
- (c) the need to protect witnesses who have agreed to go to court to give evidence on matters of anti-social behaviour
- (d) urgent social reasons
- (e) major works to the property needing to be carried out (in accordance with the Decant Policy)

#### **Assessment, priority and offer policy**

Where the Council agrees that a tenant meets the management transfer criteria, the Council does not need to apply the reasonable preference criteria.

The tenant is not assessed in the usual way through the scheme.

The Council shall generally give top priority to tenants who need to move under a management transfer, reflecting the urgent nature of the need.

Management transfers shall be agreed by the designated manager within Housing Needs and the designated manager for the Housing Revenue Account, based on supporting evidence.

If a management transfer is agreed:

- (a) the tenant shall be offered a suitable property which may be a Council or Housing Association property as soon as possible.  
The offer shall have a comparable number of rooms as the tenant's current home, unless they are in a property that is too big for their needs, in which case they may be offered a smaller property. A tenant who is granted a management transfer shall not qualify for any under-occupation incentive payment.
- (b) the tenant shall be offered housing in any area in the District that removes them from the situation of immediate risk.
- (c) the tenant's need for a management transfer shall be kept under continuous review. Should their assessed level of need or other circumstances change before the tenant receives an offer then the management transfer status may be withdrawn.

## **9.2 Joint tenancies**

If the existing tenancy is held by joint tenants and the management transfer does not include all tenants, then the tenancy shall need to be resolved first. The designated officer shall advise the tenant(s) of the available options including seeking independent advice.

## **9.3 Transfers due to domestic abuse**

From 1 November 2021 certain social housing tenants who are transferred to a new property because of [domestic abuse](#) are entitled to a lifetime secure tenancy, rather than a fixed-term flexible tenancy.

If the Council offers a tenancy to someone who is or was previously secure tenant or fully assured tenant of a social landlord, and the new tenancy is being granted for reasons connected with the domestic abuse towards that person or a member of their household, the Council shall offer a lifetime secure tenancy, not a flexible tenancy.

## **9.4 Mutual exchange**

A secure tenant has the right to exchange their tenancy, by way of assignment, with another secure tenant or with a fully assured tenant of a private registered provider of social housing (PRPSH).

The following three types of tenancy exchange are normally allowable:

- (a) assured shorthold tenant with a secure tenant
- (b) assured tenant with flexible tenant
- (c) assured tenant with assured shorthold tenant

The mutual exchange of tenancies falls outside the statutory criteria governing the allocation

of housing.

A mutual exchange may only take place with written consent from the landlord. Exchanges can take place between more than two tenants if each landlord consents.

The most popular way to find another tenant who may be interested in exchanging their home is to register on [HomeSwapper](#). Full details of the regulations governing mutual exchanges can be found on [Gov.uk – swapping a council or housing association home](#).

## **9.5 Major works - regeneration or demolition**

Tenants who are required to vacate their home due to a Compulsory Purchase Order, or Council tenants who have to move because their home requires major works, regeneration or demolition are rehoused in accordance with the Council's Decant policy.

The rules vary depending on whether the tenants are required to move permanently to another home or temporarily until they are able to return to their existing home.

## **9.6 Permanent decants**

Permanent decants are usually subject to a maximum of two offers of suitable accommodation. If the tenant does not accept the second offer, then the Council is likely to have to initiate possession proceedings via the County Court which if granted is usually conditional on the availability of a final offer of suitable accommodation at the point of obtaining full vacant possession.

### **9.6.1 Statutory compensation**

Tenants who are required to move permanently are usually entitled to a statutory home loss payment and/or a statutory disturbance payment.

## **9.7 Temporary decants**

Temporary decants are usually subject to one offer of suitable accommodation.

### **9.7.1 Discretionary disturbance payments**

Tenants who are required to move temporarily may be entitled to a discretionary disturbance payment to meet the main costs associated with the temporary relocation.

## **9.8 Other allocations outside of the scheme**

The following allocations will also be made outside of the Housing Allocations Scheme:

- (a) where a tenant succeeds to a tenancy (or an introductory tenancy) upon the death of a tenant
- (b) to accommodate a successor tenant who is under-occupying Council accommodation
- (c) where a tenancy is assigned to a person who would qualify to succeed to the tenancy if the tenant died immediately before the assignment
- (d) where a tenancy is either granted in response to a transfer request under Section 158 of the Localism Act 2011 or any other tenant transfers
- (e) where an introductory tenancy becomes a secure lifetime or secure (fixed term) tenancy on ceasing to be an introductory tenancy

- (f) where an introductory tenant undertakes a mutual exchange with a secure lifetime or secure (fixed term) tenant. In these circumstances, each party shall surrender their tenancies, and the Council shall grant each party a new tenancy which reflects their previous tenancy status. Any period the affected tenant spent as an introductory tenant in their previous property shall count towards the fulfilment of the 12-month introductory period in the new property. It should be noted that some social landlords do not allow introductory tenants to enter into a mutual exchange within any trial period
- (g) where a tenancy is disposed through a Property Adjustment Order in accordance with the relevant legislation
- (h) where a property is offered to an applicant on the Witness Protection Mobility Scheme.

## **SECTION TEN: GOVERNANCE**

### **10.1 Exceptional circumstances**

Any provision in the scheme may be waived in exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the appropriate senior manager with delegated authority (as stated in the department's Scheme of Delegations).

The application of such discretion shall normally require a full report of the circumstances of the individual case to be prepared by the Team Manager for the consideration of the delegated manager (currently the Director of Community and Wellbeing).

### **10.2 Designated decision makers**

	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Designated Manager</b>	<b>Based on information provided by</b>
i	Exceptional Circumstances	Director Community and Wellbeing	Relevant Team Manager
ii	Fraudulent applications	Director Community and Wellbeing	Relevant Team Manager
iii	Management Transfers	Director Community and Wellbeing and Director of HRA	Joint relevant Team Manager(s)
iv	Permanent Decants	Director of Housing Revenue Account	Director Community and Wellbeing
v	Temporary Decants	Director of Housing Revenue Account	Director Community and Wellbeing
vi	Mutual Exchanges	Rehousing Team Manager	Relevant Officer

### **10.3 Monitoring the allocations scheme**

Performance information on applications and allocations shall be reviewed annually to establish whether the aims and objectives of the scheme are being achieved. The findings shall be published in an Annual Lettings Report and made available on the Councils website.

### **10.4 Review of the allocations scheme**

The scheme shall be reviewed in full no later than the Council year leading up to April 2027. Some or all of the scheme may be reviewed earlier should the need arise.

### **10.5 Consultation on changes to the allocations scheme**

Before adopting a new Housing Allocations Scheme or making an alteration reflecting a major change of policy in its existing scheme, the Council shall send a copy of the draft scheme or any proposed major change to the scheme to all of the following interested parties, and give them reasonable opportunity to comment:

- Private Registered Providers of social housing with which it has nomination arrangements
- Town and Parish Councils
- The Tenants and Leaseholders Panel
- Partner agencies with an interest in the scheme.

**SECTION ELEVEN: APPENDICES****APPENDIX A: PROPERTY SIZE AND TYPE OFFERED**

The following criteria shall determine the size and type of properties that applicants are considered for:

<b>Property Size</b>	<b>Household Composition</b>
Studio flat	Single person
1-bedroom flat	Single person Couple (including where one is pregnant)
1- bedroom bungalow	Single person over 50 Couple over 50 Downsizer over 50 Applicant who requires ground floor accommodation
1-bedroom sheltered flat or bungalow	Single person over 60 Couple over 60 Applicant who requires sheltered ground floor accommodation
2-bedroom flat, maisonette or house	Single person or couple with: family member, or family members of the same sex, or 2 family members of opposite sex both under 10 years Single person or couple downsizing by 2 or more bedrooms
2-bedroom sheltered flat or bungalow	Single older person or older couple with an assessed need for an extra bedroom Single person or couple who requires sheltered ground floor accommodation with an extra bedroom Single older person or couple downsizing by 2 or more bedrooms
3- bedroom flat, maisonette or house	Single person or couple with 2 family members of opposite sex with one family member over the age of 10 years Single person or couple with 3 family members 2 of whom are of the same sex Single person or couple with 4 family members 2 each of the same sex
4- bedroom* flat maisonette or house	Single person or couple with 4 or more family members where two are of opposite sex and over the age of 10 years
5-bedroom* flat maisonette or house	Single person or couple with 5 or more family members where 2 family members are of opposite sex and one is over 10 years of age

**Exceptions**

\*Larger family sized homes are in the shortest supply. Therefore, applicants with an assessed need for four or more bedrooms may be considered for a property with one bedroom fewer than their assessed need, provided it falls within the permitted number of occupants allowed under the Housing Act 1985.

Under-occupiers wishing to downsize from a house or maisonette or flat with three bedrooms to a flat can be considered for flat with one bedroom more than their assessed need (i.e., a 2-bed flat or a 1-bed flat) with or without a garden.

Under-occupiers wishing to downsize from a house with four or more bedrooms, where they are giving up two or more bedrooms, may be considered for a house or a flat with one bedroom more than their assessed need with or without a garden.

Under-occupiers with minor rent arrears shall not be prohibited from transferring on the condition that they give an undertaking to maintain a reasonable repayment agreement until the debt is paid in full.

#### **APPENDIX B: DOWNSIZING INCENTIVE SCHEDULE FOR COUNCIL TENANTS**

<b>Size and type of property tenant is vacating</b>	<b>Size of property tenant would ordinarily need under scheme</b>	<b>Size of property tenant wants and qualifies for</b>	<b>Incentive(s)</b>
1 bedroom any	1-bedroom	1-bedroom sheltered	£1,000 (sheltered bonus)
2-bedroom flat/house/bungalow	1-bedroom	1-bedroom flat/bungalow	£1,000
3-bedroom flat/house/bungalow	1-bedroom	1-bedroom flat/bungalow	£2,000
3-bedroom flat/house/bungalow	1-bedroom	2-bedroom flat	£500 +1 spare bedroom
3-bedroom flat/house/bungalow	2-bedroom	2-bedroom flat/house/bungalow	£1,000
4-bedroom flat/house/bungalow	1-bedroom	1-bedroom flat/bungalow	£3,000
4-bedroom flat/house/bungalow	1-bedroom	2-bedroom flat/house/bungalow	£2,000 + 1 spare bedroom
4-bedroom flat/house/bungalow	2-bedroom	2-bedroom flat/house/bungalow	£2,000
4-bedroom flat/house/bungalow	2-bedroom	3-bedroom flat/house/bungalow	£1,000 + 1 spare bedroom
4-bedroom flat/house/bungalow	3-bedroom	3-bedroom flat/house/bungalow	£1,000
Any (including 1-bed) except sheltered	1-bedroom	1-bed sheltered	Above incentive + £1,000 (sheltered bonus)



## APPENDIX C: ELIGIBILITY PERSONS FROM ABROAD

A person may not be allocated accommodation under Part 6 if he or she is a person from abroad who is ineligible for an allocation under [section 160ZA](#) of the 1996 Act.

There are 2 categories for the purposes of section 160ZA:

1. (i) a person subject to immigration control – such a person is not eligible for an allocation of accommodation unless he or she comes within a class prescribed in regulations made by the Secretary of State (section 160ZA(2)), and
2. (ii) a person from abroad other than a person subject to immigration control – regulations may provide for other descriptions of persons from abroad who, although not subject to immigration control, are to be treated as ineligible for an allocation of accommodation (section 160ZA(4)).

The regulations setting out which classes of persons from abroad are eligible or ineligible for an allocation are the [Allocation of Housing and Homelessness \(Eligibility\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) (as amended) ('the Eligibility Regulations').

## APPENDIX D: GLOSSARY

### **Assessed Need**

The housing needs of an applicant that have been established through the professional assessment of their application to join the housing register e.g., the size and type of property they require and the level of priority (if any) that is awarded to their application.

### **Assisted bidding**

Providing support for an applicant to place bids for advertised properties if they would find it difficult to place bids without assistance.

### **Auto-bidding**

Automatic computer-generated bidding for advertised properties that match the assessed needs of an applicant.

### **Bands**

The method the Council uses to award priority to applicants based on their assessed need for housing. There are three Bands: A - Emergency, B – Urgent, C - Moderate.

### **Bidding**

Expressing an interest in a vacant property that is advertised. Up to three bids are allowed each weekly advertising cycle.

### **Choice- Based Lettings**

Allocating vacant properties by advertising them giving applicants some choice as to which ones to express an interest in (or 'bid' for).

### **The Council**

Epping Forest District Council.

### **Decant**

A permanent or temporary move of a tenant to allow major works/refurbishment to be carried out, or prior to demolition and redevelopment.

**Direct Allocation**

Receiving an offer of a property directly from the Council without bidding for it.

**Downsizing**

Choosing to move to a smaller property because the current home is larger than needed.

**Duties**

The statutory and regulatory responsibilities of the Council, the core services they are required to provide and the actions that they are expected to take that are defined in law or by the Government.

**Former Tenant Arrears**

Arrears of rent from a previous property that are still to be paid off.

**General needs housing**

Social housing at rents that are usually lower than the private rented sector, where there is no additional support linked to the accommodation other than repairs and general estate management.

**HomeOption**

The name of the choice-based letting scheme that the Council uses to advertise its vacant properties for people on the housing register to bid for.

**Household**

An applicant and any other person who usually lives with the applicant as a member of their family or someone who might reasonably be expected to reside with them.

**Housing Association/ Registered Provider**

Social landlords who provide affordable housing to rent or buy and are registered and regulated by the Regulator for Social Housing.

**Housing Register**

A list of households who have been assessed as qualifying for an offer of suitable social rented housing from the Council or a housing association based on their needs.

**Insanitary**

A property in such poor condition that it could be harmful to the health of people living in it.

**Key worker**

Certain jobs (usually in the public sector) that are important to keep essential services like health, education and public safety running, where staffing levels are affected by the supply of affordable local housing that is available close to the places of employment.

**Landlord Transfer**

A type of transfer that the Council as the landlord may arrange for a Council tenant outside of the housing register. A management transfer is a type of landlord transfer.

**Levelling up**

The Government's plan to spread social and economic opportunity more equally across communities and areas of the country.

**Local Lettings Plan**

These set out how properties will be allocated in a specific area for a set period of time to meet specific local issues. They are only used in exceptional circumstances.

**Management Transfer**

A type of priority given to transferring existing Council tenants to alternative social housing in exceptional circumstances where an immediate move is required and no other option is

appropriate.

**Medical Need**

The extent to which an applicant's physical health, mental health or learning difference is adversely affected by their current living conditions and/or how likely it is to stabilise or improve if they move to more suitable accommodation.

**Mutual Exchange**

A home swap between two or more social housing tenants.

**Older Person**

For the purpose of sheltered housing, an older person is an applicant aged 60 or over. For general needs bungalows, an older person is an applicant aged 50 or over.

**Reasonable preference**

Giving a level of priority to an applicant on the housing register because their circumstances fall within certain defined groups e.g. overcrowding, homelessness, medical or welfare needs.

**Registered Provider /Housing associations**

Social landlords who provide affordable housing to rent or buy and are registered and regulated by the Regulator for Social Housing.

**Settled Accommodation**

Either social rented housing or private rented housing that will be available to rent for at least six months.

**Sheltered Bungalows**

Bungalows that are linked to sheltered housing schemes and the associated support.

**Sheltered Housing**

Housing that is designed to give older people the independence of their own home with the security of having assistive technology and housing related support available.

**Social Housing Tenant**

Someone who rents a property from a local council or a registered provider of housing.

**Supported housing**

Housing with accommodation-based support (usually for a period for between 6 months and 2 years) and it is expected that the applicant shall move on when they no longer require the support.

**Suitable offer**

An offer of a property that meets the assessed needs of an applicant's household.

**Social landlords**

Provide affordable housing to rent or buy and are registered and regulated by the Regulator for Social Housing.

**Tenant**

A person who lives in a property belonging to the landlord or freeholder and holds a tenancy, lease or licence.

**Under-occupier**

A social housing tenant living in a property with more bedrooms than their household needs.

**Wellbeing**

Promoting ways to improve mental, emotional and physical health through social activities.

## **APPENDIX E : SUPPORTING DOCUMENT CHECKLIST**

### **Proof of identification and eligibility**

One of the following must be provided for each applicant:

- (a) birth certificate (a secondary form of photo identification shall be required if birth certificate is provided)
- (b) passport
- (c) gov.uk Share Code for EU citizens
- (d) National Insurance card
- (e) photograph of the applicant and all family members

Additional documents may also be required where an applicant (or in some circumstances a member of the applicant's household) is:

- (a) subject to immigration control
- (b) a national of the European Economic Area (EEA); or
- (c) an Accession State National.

Where an applicant who is accepted as a refugee or granted indefinite, exceptional, discretionary, or limited leave to remain in the UK then the relevant Home Office documents shall also be required.

Nationals of the EEA shall be required to provide recent payslips as evidence of current employment (2 months or 6 weekly) to demonstrate eligibility.

Accession State Nationals shall be required to provide current registration documents and proof of current employment e.g., recent wage slips, contract details, self-employment reference number verification.

### **Proof of residence**

Any two of the following recent documents must be provided for each applicant; documents that are more than 6 months old will not be accepted:

- (a) household bill
- (b) DWP Benefit document
- (c) current driving licence
- (d) bank, credit card or catalogue statement with current address
- (e) tenancy or licence agreement
- (f) rent book or letter from the current landlord
- (g) Section 21 or Section 8 notice from the current landlord
- (h) proof of marriage
- (i) proof of name change (if applying in a different name)

- (j) proof of pregnancy
- (k) Child Benefit award letter or a recent bank statement showing Child Benefit payments
- (l) custody or residency paperwork if access to children applicable
- (m) completion statement if an applicant has previously owned a property

The Council shall conduct credit reference checks to verify the information that the applicant has provided on their housing application in an attempt to reduce tenancy fraud. If false information has been provided at any stage, then the offer of accommodation will be withdrawn, or the application will be removed from the Housing Register.

## **APPENDIX F : MEDICAL AND WELFARE INDICATORS**

### **Indicators of medical and welfare reasonable preference categories**

Applicants given reasonable preference medical or welfare grounds shall be awarded either Band A, Band B or Band C based on their level of need

- (a) Emergency need
- (b) Urgent need
- (c) Moderate need

### **Insanitary, overcrowded, and unsatisfactory housing conditions**

- (a) lacking bathroom or kitchen
- (b) lacking inside WC
- (c) lacking cold or hot water supplies, electricity, gas, or adequate heating
- (d) sharing living room, kitchen, bathroom/WC
- (e) property in disrepair
- (f) poor internal or external arrangements

### **People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (criteria may apply to any member of the household)**

- (a) a mental illness or disorder
- (b) a physical or learning disability
- (c) chronic or progressive medical conditions (e.g., MS, HIV/AIDS)
- (d) infirmity due to old age
- (e) the need to give or receive care\* including active foster carers or those who are adopting
- (f) the need to recover from the effects of violence or threats of violence, or physical, emotional or sexual abuse
- (g) having escaped domestic abuse and are being accommodated in a refuge or other temporary accommodation
- (h) ability to fend for self, restricted for other reasons
- (i) young people at risk
- (j) people with behavioural difficulties
- (k) need for adapted housing and/or extra facilities, bedroom or bathroom
- (l) need for improved heating (on medical grounds)
- (m) need for sheltered housing (on medical grounds)
- (n) need for ground floor accommodation (on medical grounds)
- (o) need to be near friends/relatives or medical facility on medical grounds
- (p) need to move following hospitalisation or long-term care

## **APPENDIX G: GENERAL INFORMATION AND ADVICE**

The following general information about the scheme shall be made available:

- (a) the procedures for applying to go onto the housing register and for applying for advertised vacancies
- (b) how applicants will be prioritised under the scheme
- (c) how successful applicants will be selected
- (d) how properties will be advertised, including bidding cycles and restrictive labelling (for example, certain properties will only be allocated to applicants who meet the mobility requirements of the property)
- (e) how to request a review of the procedures; and
- (f) details of the private registered providers that advertise vacancies through HomeOption the Councils choice-based lettings website.

Applicants shall be provided with information regarding their own application which shall include:

- (a) the Band they have been awarded under the scheme
- (b) the type of properties they are entitled to bid for
- (c) their chances of bidding successfully on the property types and areas in which they are interested
- (d) how bidding, direct offers assisting bidding and auto-bidding applies to them
- (e) the documents they will need to supply in regard to verification and references, and when they will need to provide it
- (f) the average waiting time per property type for each priority housing needs group; and
- (g) whether their application has been rejected and the options that are available to them.

Advertisements shall include as many of the following as possible:

- (a) property location
- (b) property type, size and floor level
- (c) type of tenancy to be offered
- (d) amount of rent and other charges payable
- (e) the energy performance certificate rating
- (f) the type of heating
- (g) whether there is a heating charge payable that is not covered by housing benefit
- (h) any additional amenities such as a garden or parking with the property
- (i) photos of the scheme or the locality and links to guides about the local area; and
- (j) adaptations to the property that may aid mobility within the home.

Applicants who require assistance to access the scheme shall, upon request, be offered the following services:

- (a) an interpretation service if their first language is not English
- (b) signing if speech or hearing is impaired
- (c) provision of documents in large print or braille if they have a visual impairment; and/or
- (d) an interview to explain the scheme and information about where independent advice can be obtained about the scheme
- (e) an easy-to-read version of key documents



**APPENDIX H: LOCAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXT**

The scheme pays due regard to the relevant parts of the following

<b>Context</b>	<b>Specific reference material</b>
<b>Corporate Plan 2018-2023</b>	<p>The scheme supports Epping Forest District Council's Corporate Plan objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivering core services that people want</li> <li>• Adults and Children are supported in times of need</li> <li>• People live longer healthier and independent lives</li> <li>• People and communities achieve their full potential</li> </ul>
<b>Regulatory Standards</b>	<p>The scheme pays due regard to the following regulatory guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocation of Accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England June 2012, Supplementary Guidance December 2013, March 2015 December 2020</li> <li>• Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) (Amendment) Regulations June 2021</li> <li>• Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)</li> <li>• Homelessness Reduction Act 2017: Homelessness Code of Guidance</li> <li>• Providing Social Housing for Local People March 2015</li> <li>• Public Sector Equality Duty</li> <li>• Regulator of Social Housing consumer standards</li> <li>• Improving Access to Social Housing for Victims of Domestic Abuse in Refuges November 2018</li> </ul>
<b>Legislation</b>	<p>The scheme supports the following legislation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003</li> <li>• Care Act 2014</li> <li>• Children's Act 1989 and Children's Act 2004</li> <li>• Data Protection Act 2018</li> <li>• Domestic Abuse Act 2021</li> <li>• Equality Act 2010</li> <li>• Homelessness Act 2002 as amended</li> <li>• Housing Act 1985</li> <li>• Housing Act 1996 as amended</li> <li>• Immigration and Social Security Coordination Act (ISSC) 2020</li> <li>• Localism Act 2011</li> </ul>
<b>Related policies</b>	<p>The scheme is linked to the following policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-social Behaviour and Hate Crime Policy</li> <li>• Customer Complaints Policy</li> <li>• Decant Policy (draft)</li> <li>• Domestic Abuse Policy 2022-2025 (draft)</li> <li>• Income Recovery Policy 2020</li> <li>• Privacy Policy</li> <li>• Safeguarding Policy</li> <li>• Tenancy Policy 2022-2027</li> </ul>

<b>Related strategies</b>	<p>The scheme is linked to the following strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asset Management Strategy (Draft)</li> <li>• Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027</li> <li>• Housing Strategy 2022-2027</li> </ul>
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#### APPENDIX I: VERSION CONTROL LOG

Version	Date	Details of changes included in update	Author
V01.00	16 Sep 2022	Published Allocations Scheme	Janice Nuth

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September 2022

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