

## **WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**26 FEBRUARY 2019**

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#### **Title:**

#### **OUTCOMES OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE WAVERLEY SCRUTINY GROUP'S REPORT ON MUTUAL EXCHANGES AND DOWNSIZING TO SENIOR LIVING HOMES**

**[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Carole King]  
[Wards Affected: All]**

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#### **Summary and purpose:**

The Waverley Scrutiny Group completed a review on the Mutual Exchange policy and process, including reference to downsizing to senior living schemes. The report was presented to the Head of Housing Operations in September 2018 and this committee in November 2018.

This report informs the Committee how the Housing Service team has addressed the recommendations raised in the Waverley Scrutiny Group's report on mutual exchanges including a review of the Mutual Exchange Policy.

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#### **How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:**

This report relates to all corporate priorities; People, Place and Prosperity identifying tenants options, homes and social mobility.

#### **Equality and Diversity Implications:**

The housing team completed an Equality Impact Assessment as part of the policy and process review to ensure fair access to all.

#### **Financial Implications:**

The implementation of the scrutiny recommendations and action plan will be undertaken within existing resources. An effective mutual exchange policy will support the reduction of rent loss and re-let costs.

#### **Legal Implications:**

The policy ensures the correct application of the grounds to give and withhold consent for a mutual exchange.

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#### **Background**

1. The report from the Waverley Scrutiny Group was presented to the Head of Housing Operations and the Tenancy and Estates Team Leader in September 2018. The comprehensive report covered the following:

- whether the mutual exchange policy and process is fit for purpose and fair to tenants and leaseholders
  - how the appropriate teams within the Housing Service are operating the process
  - what systems are being used to monitor and regulate mutual exchanges
  - what communication is there to encourage downsizing by mutual exchange and moves to Senior Living Schemes
  - how cost effective the Mutual Exchange process is and whether it provides value for money
  - recommendations to improve the process
2. The Council supports mutual exchanges to enable tenant mobility, tenant choice and sustainable communities through the best use of housing stock. All Council tenants with secure or flexible (secure) tenancy agreements have the right to exchange their property.
  3. Mutual exchanges are promoted through officer advice, the tenants newsletter and online. A home exchange event is held each year to promote the mutual exchange option and provide support and advice to tenants who wish to move. In addition Waverley subscribes to HomeSwapper the UK's leading mutual exchange service with over 500,000 tenants, looking to swap Council and Housing Association homes
  4. There were 54 successful mutual exchanges during 2018, 36 attendees at the mutual exchange event and 563 Waverley tenants registered on HomeSwapper seeking a move.

### **Report recommendations and response**

5. The report comprehensively reviewed the mutual exchange process and identified 20 recommendations that the Waverley Scrutiny Group concluded would result in improvements to the current mutual exchange process.
6. The Housing Service reviewed the recommendations and has grouped similar recommendations together into three work streams communications, process and IT.
7. The Housing Service agreed with 13 of the recommendations and partially agreed with seven. The service supported the intention of the seven partially agreed recommendations but needed to investigate the IT functionality and team capacity to deliver the prescriptive elements.
8. Please see Annexe 1 for all the recommendations with the Council's responses and updates shown.
9. All recommendations have been addressed and completed following the internal process, IT and communications review.
10. The group's recommendations included the review of the Mutual Exchange Policy and provided suggestions to improve the document. The policy has been reviewed and updated accordingly with a greater customer focus. Please refer to Annexe 2 for the revised Policy.

### **Conclusion**

11. The Housing service welcomed the report from the Waverley Scrutiny Group providing an opportunity to reinvigorate the mutual exchange process and increase mobility for tenants.
  12. The team have completed an internal review of communications with the aim to ensure tenants have full details of the process and criteria to self assess mutual exchanges, submit feasible applications and prevent disappointment and dissatisfaction with the process.
  13. The process and IT review were also completed with a strong customer focus, simplifying the process and making better use of IT with the development of online forms for tenants and officers
  14. The work completed on the recommendations has resulted in a simplified process, updated communications and reinvigoration of mutual exchanges.
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### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. supports the updated Mutual Exchange Policy;
  2. notes the successful implementation of the 20 Waverley Scrutiny Group recommendations; and
  3. makes any comments or suggestions in respect of the Council's responses and updates with regard to the Waverley Scrutiny Group's recommendations
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### **Background Papers**

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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