



Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)

Time and Date

3.00 pm on Wednesday, 4th November, 2015

Place

Committee Rooms 2 and 3 - Council House

Public Business

1. **Apologies and Substitutions**

2. **Declarations of Interest**

3. **Minutes** (Pages 3 - 6)

(a) To agree the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 September, 2015

(b) Matters arising

4. **Community Development Service - Impact and Priorities** (Pages 7 - 18)

Report of the Executive Director of People

Councillor Abbott, Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise has been invited to attend for consideration of this item

5. **Active Citizens, Strong Communities Strategy: Progress Update and Priorities** (Pages 19 - 32)

Report of the Director of Public Health

Councillor Abbott, Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise has been invited to attend for consideration of this item

6. **Coventry Homefinder Policy - 12 months review** (Pages 33 - 90)

Report of the Executive Director of Place

Councillor Abbott, Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise has been invited to attend for consideration of this item

7. **Outstanding Issues**

All outstanding issues have been included in the Work Programme

8. **Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) Work Programme**
(Pages 91 - 94)

Report of the Executive Director of Resources

9. **Any Other Items of Public Business**

Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as a matter of urgency because of the special circumstances involved.

Chris West, Executive Director, Resources, Council House Coventry

Tuesday, 27 October 2015

Note: The person to contact about the agenda and documents for this meeting is Suzanne Bennett / Gurdip Paddan Tel: 024 7683 3072 / 3075 Email: suzanne.bennett@coventry.gov.uk / gurdip.paddan@coventry.gov.uk

Membership: Councillors P Akhtar, M Auluck, J Innes, P Male, K Mulhall, B Singh, D Skinner and R Thay

By invitation Councillor Abbott, Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise

Please note: a hearing loop is available in the committee rooms

If you require a British Sign Language interpreter for this meeting OR if you would like this information in another format or language please contact us.

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Public Document Pack Agenda Item 3

Coventry City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) held at 3.00 pm on Wednesday, 16 September 2015

Present:

Members: Councillor N Akhtar (Chair)
Councillor M Auluck
Councillor J Innes
Councillor P Male
Councillor K Mulhall
Councillor B Singh

Other Members: Councillors F Abbott

Employees (by Directorate): K Fawcett (Place Directorate)
G Paddan (Resources Directorate)
A Maqsood (Place Directorate)

In Attendance: N Slinn (Salvation Army)
V Ross
P Bunn

Apologies: Councillors P Akhtar and T Khan

In accordance with the Council's Constitution Councillor N Akhtar chaired the meeting in the absence of Councillor T Khan

Public Business

7. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared.

8. Minutes

The minutes of the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) meeting held on 8 July 2015 were signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

9. Twelve Month Implementation Report on Supported Accommodation and Floating Support for Homeless Service Users and Ex-Offenders

The Scrutiny Board considered a report of the Executive Director of Place, which provided an update on progress and outcomes in the first 12 months from the commencement of the contract. A presentation was received from the Salvation Army who had secured the contract to manage the supported accommodation and floating support service for homeless service users (aged 25+) and ex-offenders (aged 18+) from 1 April 2014.

The Board were advised that contract review meetings were held to monitor progress against the outcomes detailed in the contract specification against spend. At the last contract review meeting held on 27 July the Salvation Army provided information which indicated that spend was in line with the expected outcomes of the contract specification.

The presentation from the Salvation Army included:

1. Service performance
2. Independent Quality Inspectorate – assessing standards
3. Support for clients
4. Outcome Star tool focused on ten areas of support – scored by client and key-worker
5. Rough sleepers in the City
6. Complex needs and housing first – clarification was sought on complex needs
7. Increase of hostel provision
8. Future plans – third scheme, family provisions and relocation of the Hub service

The Board questioned the officers on a number of issues and responses were provided, matters raised included:

- a) Consideration of alternative accommodation – locations were being identified
- b) Government Inspection night – one night of inspection during the month of October. Other areas have been inspected and a number of homeless had been identified and offered accommodation, food and wash facilities.
- c) Faith based communities helping by donating food as well as shelter; this was to be investigated further
- d) Implications of Housing Policy changes in London and subsequent influence on housing stock in Coventry – to be considered at an alternative meeting

RESOLVED that the report be noted and appreciated the support and work undertaken by the Cabinet Member for Community and Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise on this subject.

10. **Outstanding Issues**

The Scrutiny Board noted that all outstanding issues had been included in the Work Programme for the current year.

11. **Work Programme**

The Scrutiny Board considered the Work Programme for 2015-16.

RESOLVED that the programme be updated with ‘Implications of Housing Policy changes in London and subsequent influence on housing stock in Coventry’.

12. **Any Other Items of Public Business**

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed 4.15pm)

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Public report

Scrutiny Board 4 and Cabinet Member Report

Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)
Cabinet Member – Community Development, Co-operatives
and Social Enterprise

4th November 2015

20th November 2015

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise - Cllr Abbott

Director Approving Submission of the Report:

Executive Director for People

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title:

Community Development Service - Impact and Priorities

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

The Community Development Service (CDS) was established in 2014, following a consultation on the future of neighbourhood working in the City in 2013. As a result of this process £820k was saved. Since its creation a further 3 posts have been deleted as a contribution towards Council savings requirements.

The team works with communities to support the delivery of Council priorities in terms of people doing more for themselves and improving general health and wellbeing in neighbourhoods. They focus on community empowerment by facilitating individuals and groups to build local capacity, get involved and be influential in their local areas.

The team consists of two Team Managers, nine Community Development Officers, one Business Development Officer and one Business Administrator apprentice. The current budget is £547k.

The team works across the City, in all wards in Coventry. Although officers spend more time in deprived areas, they respond to requests for help from all parts of the City and often engage with all communities e.g. to populate the Community Activity Directory.

One element of the work of the CDS has been to develop a Community Activity Directory (CAD) and following approval from the Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise on 10th December 2014, this was implemented on the City Council website in April 2015. The CAD was formally launched on 3rd July 2015 at a “Creative Communities” event for local community groups.

Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) requested an update on the impact of the work of the CDS at their work programme discussion meeting in June 2015. Furthermore, the Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise requested an update on implementation of the CAD, six months after implementation.

As the CAD is a core part of CDS activity, updates on performance and impact have been brought together into this single report.

Recommendations:

Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) is asked to:

- (i) Consider the report and submit any comments to Cabinet Member for their consideration on the content of the report
- (ii) Support the recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise

Cabinet Member is recommended to:

- (i) Consider comments from the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)

and approve;

- (ii) The renewed focus of the Community Development Service to reflect the Council’s budget position, planned transformation programmes such as City Centre First and aspirations to treat local communities as partners in the delivery of services.
- (iii) That the remaining Community Development Service resources being used to target support to areas of most need or where communities require encouragement to explore how they can actively contribute to their own success.
- (iv) The priorities identified for the Community Development Service for the next 12 months, as proposed in section 8.
- (v) The exploration of the development of a resource directory for Coventry to enable and encourage communities to create and maintain their own information and networks, and to syndicate information from other information sources such as NHS Choices.

List of Appendices included:

None

Background Documents

None

Other useful documents:

Cabinet Report, "Neighbourhood Working", 9th July 2013

Cabinet Member (Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise) Report, "Community Directory/Single Point of access", 23rd July 2014

Cabinet Member (Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise) Report, "Developing a Community Activity Directory", 10th December 2014

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

Yes - Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) on 4th November 2015

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

1 Background

- 1.1 On 9th July 2013, Cabinet approved a number of recommendations for officers and the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Equalities relating to the development and implementation of the Community Development Service. Following staff consultation and a recruitment process, the new service was established in March 2014 with recruitment complete in July 2014. The team currently consists of two Team Managers, nine Community Development Officers, one Business Development Officer and one Business Administrator Apprentice.
- 1.2 The City Council is committed to asset based working where communities and individuals make full use of the assets available to them and reduce the need for City Council services.
- 1.3 On 10th December 2014, the Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise approved the implementation and launch of a “Community Activity Directory”. The Directory was implemented in April 2015 and provides information about community activities that take place across the City.
- 1.4 On 17th December 2014, the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Services and the Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise endorsed the policy direction of the emerging “Active Citizens, Strong Communities” asset –based working strategy and initial implementation plan. The strategy and plan are now live and agreed actions are being progressed.
- 1.5 The strategy and plan focus on enabling and empowering local people, communities and groups to use and develop their own skills and potential. The strategy recognises the need for different conversations with local communities, at a time of significant pressure on Council resources.
- 1.6 The overall aim of the Strategy is “We want to encourage, enable and empower residents to be active citizens, building strong, involved communities and be partners in reducing demand and improving services. We will work with local communities and local people to intervene before problems reach a crisis and to find solutions that reflect and build on local people’s skills, experience and capability”.
- 1.7 The CDS plays a key role in the delivery of each of the five pillars of the “Active Citizens, Strong Communities” Strategy, specifically focusing on “Building Capacity”.

2 Community Development Service

- 2.1 The Community Development Service has been operational since March 2014. Since that time, the Service has been responsible for a range of work including the following:

3 Implementation and launch of a “Community Activity Directory”

- 3.1 The Care Act (2014) placed a duty on Local Authorities to “establish and maintain a service for providing people in its area with information and advice relating to care and support for adults and support for carers”. The Community Activity Directory, implemented on the City Council website in April 2015, helps the Council to meet this statutory duty.

- 3.2 The CAD provides a directory of resources available within the community and, in turn, this forms a component of the overall information and advice offer as well as supporting the delivery of the Council's "Active Citizens, Strong Communities" Strategy.
- 3.3 The CAD offers information about approximately 700 different activities that take place across the city with direct public access. People are able to search for activities using various keywords including local area searches by postcode or by activity type e.g. dance.
- 3.4 The focus of the Directory is on enabling people to easily find out about what is available in their local communities without needing to contact the City Council, or specifically Social Care services. In turn, this should reduce pressure on front-line services.
- 3.5 A range of user testing was completed prior to making the CAD accessible to the public and formal launch. Feedback on early versions of the CAD was received from Councillors, the Disabled Employee Network (DEN), Age UK Coventry, Social Care Direct, Healthwatch, Coventry Cares Learning Network and the Adult Social Care brokerage. This feedback was used to inform changes and improvements to the Directory, although comments were mostly positive.
- 3.6 The CAD was then formally launched on 3rd July 2015 at a "Creative Communities" event, attended by 82 people from 44 different local community groups. The event also celebrated the impact of the Community Grant funding process, referred to later in this report. A Communication Plan was developed to ensure that the CAD was widely promoted through partner organisations and social media.
- 3.7 Since April, the number of (internal and external) users of the CAD has steadily increased, with a specific peak following the launch event in July. The number of pages being viewed by people is also increasing, suggesting an increase in searches for different groups and activities.

The table below provides a breakdown of usage over a 5 month period:

Month	Visits	Page Views	Returning Visitors	Unique Visitors
April	495	1419	389	196
May	692	1652	293	609
June	896	2239	348	757
July	1476	3916	561	1304
August	1147	2807	414	1010

- 3.8 The CAD is now one of the best used pages within the Health and Social Care section of the City Council website. Since April 2015, the CAD has consistently appeared in the top twenty most used pages within this section of the website, with people being diverted there when looking for support from the City Council. The CAD also appears in other areas of the City Council website including the libraries and sports sections.
- 3.9 The Community Development Service continues to monitor usage of the Directory, taking account of how it is accessed, who is using it and entry/exit routes.
- 3.10 In November 2015, a review of CAD content will be completed. This will involve contact with each group/activity listed to confirm the accuracy of information held and updates being completed as necessary.

- 3.11 As with all preventative work, it is difficult to properly assess the impact of the CAD but people do now have better access to information about the availability of community activities in Coventry. This enables people to make informed choices that have a positive impact on their ability to remain independent and socially active.
- 3.12 Ongoing development of a resource directory for Coventry will be a component of the future transformation of Adult Social Care. The opportunity to utilise technology to enable and encourage communities to create and maintain their own information and networks, and to syndicate information from other information sources such as NHS Choices, will be explored.

4 Community Grant

- 4.1 The Community Development Service manages the Community Grant Fund of £100k per annum. In 2014/15, a total of 177 applications were received during two funding rounds and 70 awards were made to the value of £97,602.00.
- 4.2 The Community Grant is a valuable resource for local community and voluntary sector groups, providing important funding to a number of community organisations to enable their work to continue.
- 4.3 The CDS completes an evaluation process of all applications received and decisions on allocation of the Community Grant Fund are then made by the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities based on Council Officer recommendations.
- 4.4 In addition, the CDS supports all Community Grant applicants regardless of their application success. This is to ensure that anticipated outcomes are realised where a grant has been awarded or to further explore the viability of project proposals and seek other potential funding streams where an application has been unsuccessful.
- 4.5 A range of positive impacts have been realised through the grant award process, including work with people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, refugees, new and migrant communities, isolated older people and people with disabilities. Funding awarded to Knitting Needles, a group of older people meeting to chat, promote social interaction and reduce isolation is one example of this. The group were awarded £920, which they used to fund a more stable venue to meet in and plan future events such as a Christmas Fair and group knitting for local charities. They have since been nominated for a Queens Award for Voluntary Service (see Section 7.2) and are working with another local group to produce poppies to raise money for the British Legion.
- 4.6 Willenhall Wanderers are a further example of a group who have benefited from a Community Grant payment alongside support from the CDS. The football team has a contract with each of their players that if they commit any crime or anti-social behaviour in the area, a match ban and fine is imposed.
- 4.7 Willenhall Wanderers were awarded £640 in Round 1, 2014/15. This was not sufficient though for them to continue running as a football team, due to player's subscriptions not covering rising costs. A Community Development Officer worked with the group to identify alternative funding options and eventually identified Galliford Try; currently responsible for significant redevelopment projects across the City. As a result of support from the CDS, Willenhall Wanderers have now been offered support from Galliford Try in the form of purchasing new kit and equipment to the value of £1570, the offer of apprenticeship for unemployed members of the team, and they are currently looking to support the running costs for the 2015/16 season in the way of pitch fees, league fees and insurance.

5 External funding applications

- 5.1 The Community Development Service works with community groups to apply for and access external funding for use in their local community, to run local events targeting hard to reach communities and support the work of volunteers. Between June 2014 and June 2015, the CDS supported groups to apply for more than £600k from a range of external funds that included, Reaching Communities, Heart of England Community Foundation, Council of Europe and the Roma Migrant Fund. To date approximately £90k has been awarded and just over £500k worth of applications are awaiting decisions.
- 5.2 One example of a community group that has been supported to apply for external funding is Ekta Unity. The group is based in Foleshill and run by volunteers, with up to 60 women accessing the sessions on health, exercise and socialising on a daily basis. The group are tackling issues of mental health and well-being and focus on preventing mental health crisis in South Asian women in Foleshill. The Group has been supported by the CDS to apply for £200k funding from the Big Lottery, which would enable the Group to ensure that people who use the services are supported and they could recruit a co-ordinator and fund-raiser.
- 5.3 A further example is Community Empowerment and Voices of Hope (CEVOH). As a result of the external funding that they were awarded, CEVOH have put together a neighbourhood plan that focuses on supporting residents from BAME communities. They have also been introduced to the Willenhall forum, who is working on their own neighbourhood plan, enabling both groups to share ideas and resources.

6 Integrated Neighbourhood Team pilot

- 6.1 The Community Development Service played a key role in the pilot and future scoping of the Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INT). INT's are made up of a team of professionals from across Health and Social Care in Coventry. They bring people together across organisational boundaries to ensure that the right help and care is available for older people who need support. While the CDS will not be directly involved in INT delivery as it is rolled out across the City, their contribution throughout the 12 month pilot enhanced partner organisation's understanding of community and voluntary groups and the role that a local community can play in improving people's health and wellbeing.

7 Local Community Support

- 7.1 The Community Development Service actively supports local communities to start new groups, run events, encourage the use of volunteering and generally take more control over what happens in their neighbourhood or community of interest. Recently, specific work has been undertaken:
 - i) In Willenhall, where focus groups and an appreciative enquiry event were used to widen participation in developing the neighbourhood plan, which the Willenhall Community Forum is producing.
 - ii) In Cheylesmore, two events were held; the first involved residents in mapping out what community activities are already taking place and setting out future aspirations for their area. The second event was planned and organised by active citizens and involved community groups in a participatory budgeting event, which resulted in section 106 monies being allocated for a range of local projects.
 - iii) In Foleshill, supporting a £800k bid which will help provide a purpose built community building where new and emerging communities can meet and share ideas and visions for the local community. The focus will be on building a strong stakeholders group where

residents and partners can unite and be involved in shaping services for the future in Foleshill.

iv) In Tile Hill local interested people were supported through an appreciative inquiry event to asset map the local area. This has led to 10 people signing up to a leadership course offered by Warwick University

v) Further work is planned for Hillfields where stakeholders are planning a community event to be held later this year. The harder to reach communities will be encouraged to come together to celebrate the diverse community of Hillfields. This will be an opportunity to promote the best of Hillfields, to talk about what services people most use, what people would like more of and more importantly how they wish to influence future activities and services where they live and work.

vi) The CDS is identifying community “gems”. These are local residents who want to do more in their local communities but are unsure how to get started. The Service has recently supported local people who use The Old Crown in Alderman’s Green to form a community group. The group operates from the premises and will support local charities, run local activities and is considering running a luncheon club for the more isolated residents living in the area. They are also running family activities throughout school breaks that concentrate on healthy eating and having fun.

7.2 In recognition of the work of voluntary and community groups and to raise the profile of the important work that they do, the CDS has worked with groups to make nominations for the Queens Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS). This is the highest award given to volunteer groups across the UK. A total of 13 nominations were made for Coventry groups, with the CDS directly facilitating 4 of these.

8 Future priorities

8.1 The Community Development Service will play a key role in the Council’s aim to increase the participation of communities across Coventry and supporting the delivery of public sector transformation. This might include the use of a range of techniques and approaches such as participatory budgeting and appreciative enquiry.

8.2 The Council’s financial position and aspirations to build effective relationships with local communities mean that the CDS will need to focus on preparing local communities to be in the position to take an increased role in the delivery of services.

8.3 A number of activities and services provided by the voluntary and community sector will also help to mitigate the impact of Council Service reductions. Further development of these existing groups must be a priority.

8.4 The focus of the CDS will therefore be on encouraging local communities to do more for themselves and developing groups that will help to mitigate the impact of reductions in public sector spending. In doing this, the service will take account of other community support that is available, to ensure effective use of the totality of resources.

9 Options considered and recommended proposal

9.1 The Community Development Service has made a positive impact since it was established in 2014, with a range of support being provided to Community and Voluntary sector groups and organisations across Coventry. The service now has a clear identity within the city with positive relationships with active citizens, groups and partners. This provides a good platform for delivery of those priorities outlined above.

- 9.2 The Council's budget position, planned transformation programmes such as City Centre First and aspirations to treat local communities as partners in the delivery of services mean that a renewed focus is required for the CDS.
- 9.3 The service has reduced in capacity since implementation. Remaining resources must be used to target support to areas of most need or where communities require encouragement to explore how they can actively contribute to their own success.
- 9.4 The Community Activity Directory is a positive step forwards in the Council fulfilling its role, under the Care Act 2014, to focus on people's health and wellbeing and share information that will help this. Options to develop a sustainable model of delivery and maintenance for a resource directory in Coventry should be explored.

10 Results of consultation undertaken

- 10.1 Feedback on the Community Activity Directory, to inform the final version was sought from a range of groups and organisations as described in Section 3.5. People were asked to complete a brief questionnaire to share their views or could feed back more informally via e-mail or telephone.
- 10.2 The "Creative Communities" event in July 2015 provided a further opportunity for people to ask questions, provide feedback and make suggestions for how the Directory might be improved.
- 10.3 During this event, feedback was sought on the type of support that groups find most useful in helping them to develop. Responses will be used to inform the Community Development Service work programme.

11 Timetable for implementing this decision

- 11.1 A review and update of data contained within the Community Activity Directory will be completed in November 2015.
- 11.2 The Community Development Service is already working towards achievement of the priorities described in Section 8.1 to 8.4 above. The impact of this work will be measured in line with the delivery timescales associated with transformation and engagement programmes.

12 Comments from Executive Director, Resources

- 12.1 Financial implications
There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.
- 12.2 Legal implications
There are no specific legal implications.

13 Other implications

- 13.1 **How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?**

The work of the Community Development Service will make a positive contribution to the council's priorities, particularly in relation to: a prosperous Coventry; citizens living longer, healthier, independent lives; making Coventry an attractive and enjoyable place to be; ensuring that children and young people are safe, achieve and make a positive

contribution; encouraging a creative, active and vibrant city; developing a more equal city with cohesive communities and neighbourhoods.

13.2 How is risk being managed?

Risk will be managed through risk management processes and frameworks where required. Specific risk assessments will be completed for individual programmes of work. The Community Development Service undertakes monitoring activity to ensure that they are able to measure the impact of the work that they do.

13.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

The work of the Community Development Service develops and builds upon existing strengths within communities. It is expected that the work of the Service will result in Coventry's residents being offered alternatives to Council provided services, potentially reducing demand in the future.

13.4 Equalities / EIA

An Equality Consultation Analysis (ECA) has not been completed. However, equalities impact data is now routinely requested from all groups and organisations who are awarded funding from the Community Grant. Information provided to date shows us that applicants who applied for Round 1 2015/16 were reaching whole communities from young people aged under 16 years to those people aged over 75 years, all ethnic groups, were accessible for disabled people and were not religion specific.

13.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

There are no general impacts for, or on, the environment. Some of the individual projects supported by the Community Development Service have a positive impact on the local environment.

13.6 Implications for partner organisations?

The programme of work for the Community Development Service focuses on changing the current relationship that the Council has with local communities in Coventry including the community and voluntary sector.

Report author(s):**Name and job title:**

Michelle McGinty – Head of Involvement and Partnerships

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People

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Contributor/approver name	Title	Directorate or organisation	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
Contributors:				
Maureen Metcalf	Community Development Service Team Leader	People	30/9/15	5/10/15
Martin Lawlor	Business Development Officer	People	30/9/15	13/10/15
Helen Shankster	Insight Manager (Engagement)	Chief Executive's	30/9/15	2/10/15
Gemma Tate	Policy Analyst	People	30/9/15	5/10/15
Scott Taylor	Head of Business Systems	People	30/9/15	6/10/15
Alison Hook	E-communications Co-ordinator	Chief Executive's	30/9/15	5/10/15
Michelle Rose	Governance Services Officer	Resources	30/9/15	1/10/15
Gennie Holmes	Scrutiny Co-ordinator	Resources	30/9/15	1/10/15
Pete Fahy	Director of Adult Services	People	30/9/15	5/10/15
Names of approvers for submission: (officers and members)				
Finance: Ewan Dewar	Finance Manager	Resources	30/9/15	2/10/15
Legal: Julie Newman	People Team Manager	Resources	30/9/15	2/10/15
Executive Director: Gail Quinton	Executive Director	People	16/10/15	16/10/15
Members: Councillor Abbott	Cabinet Member		8/10/15	15/10/15

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Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)
Cabinet Member

4th November, 2015
20th November 2015

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise – Cllr Abbott

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of Public Health

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title:

Active Citizens, Strong Communities Strategy: Progress Update and Priorities

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

The Active Citizens, Strong Communities Strategy was endorsed at a joint cabinet member meeting on 26 November 2014.

The overall aims of the strategy are: *We want to encourage, enable and empower residents to be active citizens, building strong, involved communities and to be partners in reducing demand and improving services. We will work with local communities and local people to intervene before problems reach a crisis and to find solutions that reflect and build on local people's skills, experience and capability.*

As this is a developmental strategy, it was agreed that an initial progress update should be provided by December 2015, which should include further recommendations for actions to support implementation. This report provides progress updates for agreed actions in the Implementation Plan (see the Appendix).

This report also provides updates on progress made towards making Coventry a *social enterprise city*, which was supported in principle by the cabinet member in November 2014. This aspiration is entirely consistent with the aims of the Active Citizens, Strong Involved Communities Strategy and could provide a real boost to realising the strategic aim. It is intended that actions to achieve that vision will be incorporated into the Implementation Plan.

The main focus of the report is to consider key learning that has emerged from a number of pilot engagement programmes and other opportunities for strengthening implementation. These include: the launch of the Ignite Programme and development of an Early Action Resilience Centre, which will provide a city-wide resource to share learning and champion good practice; the refocusing of the Coventry Partnership which will provide opportunities for networked communities; and, the 'Transforming Communities, With Communities' which has provided a

cross-partner 'team' with skills and knowledge needed to transform the way that organisations and communities work in neighbourhoods.

This learning will inform proposals for future implementation, which will be brought to the cabinet member by December 2015.

Recommendations:

The Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board is asked to:

- 1) Consider the recommendations from the report to the Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise
- 2) Identify any additional recommendations for future policy direction.

The Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise is asked to:

- (1) Note the progress made towards implementing the Active Citizens, Strong Communities Strategy and the learning from specific initiatives
- (2) Agree to consider a revised implementation plan by December 2015
- (3) Continue the Councils commitment to work in partnership, to encourage and support the growth of social enterprise towards the longer term aim of Coventry being a Social Enterprise City, and, agree to incorporate this into the Implementation Plan

List of Appendices included:

Active citizens; strong and involved communities Implementation Plan Update October 2015

Background Document

None

Other useful document:

Active Citizens, Strong Communities Strategy

<http://democraticservices.coventry.gov.uk/ie/ListDocuments.aspx?CId=667&MId=10573>

Community Development Service - impact and priorities – the report will be discussed at: Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) on 4th November, 2015
Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise on 20th November 2015

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

Yes, it will be considered by the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) on 4 November 2015

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Active Citizens, Strong Communities Strategy: Progress Update and Priorities

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 The Active Citizens, Strong Communities Strategy was endorsed at a joint cabinet member meeting on 26 November 2014. It was agreed to be a developmental strategy and that a progress update against an initial implementation plan along with further recommendations for implementation should be provided by December 2015.
- 1.2 The overall aims of the strategy are: *We want to encourage, enable and empower residents to be active citizens, building strong, involved communities and to be partners in reducing demand and improving services. We will work with local communities and local people to intervene before problems reach a crisis and to find solutions that reflect and build on local people's skills, experience and capability.*
- 1.3 Subsequently, learning from pilot engagement initiatives, launching of the Ignite programme and developments through the Coventry Partnership, are providing new opportunities to achieve the strategic aims across the city.
- 1.4 As budgetary and service demand pressures on the Council and other public sector organisations continue to increase, it is imperative that partner organisations work cohesively to re-focus and renew relationships with citizens to achieve the confidence and trust necessary to work together to achieve radical transformation of the way that services are delivered.
- 1.5 In November 2014 the Cabinet Member considered the outcomes of a round table event on social enterprise and gave support in principle to working towards Coventry as a social enterprise city. This would require working in partnership and recognising the expertise of the sector to encourage and support the growth of social enterprise.
- 1.6 The aspiration for Coventry to become a Social Enterprise City is entirely consistent with the aims of the Active Citizens, Strong Communities Strategy and could provide a real boost to realising these, for example through ensuring that resources in the city to develop social enterprises are directed towards fledgling community based enterprises. This report therefore brings together progress updates for each so that opportunities to achieve complementarity can be seized.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

2.1 Progress and lessons learned

- 2.2 A summary of the progress made against agreed actions is attached as the Appendix.
- 2.3 Key achievements include successful delivery of the Transforming Communities, With Communities Programme, which included skills development through two action learning sets for employees from a range of organisations, including Coventry City Council (libraries, adult social care, Community Development Service), West Midlands Police, Grapevine, Coventry Law Centre, and Willenhall Community Forum. The programme was provided by Mutual Gain and facilitated by the Insight Team. Key achievements include:
 - Participants have developed and practiced skills for empowering engagement techniques – appreciative inquiry, participatory budgeting, focus groups etc.
 - An enthusiastic cross-organisation 'team' committed to supporting the city to develop active citizenship
 - Recruitment and engagement of previously inactive residents in appreciative inquiry to widen participation in development of the Willenhall Community Forum's neighbourhood plan

- Asset mapping with residents, community organisations and ward councillors in Cheylesmore
 - Participatory budgeting to allocate section 106 money (set aside from development of the local Asda store) to a range of local projects in Cheylesmore, which was citizen led, support by local ward councillors and has brought together established community projects with more diverse members of the community
 - A resource pack to use for planning and conducting future events
- 2.4 Success by Coventry Law Centre and Grapevine in attracting funding for the Ignite Programme has resulted in the launch of transformational partnership working in two neighbourhoods to build personal resilience and refocus services towards early help to reduce the need for crisis level interventions for vulnerable residents; one in Bell Green will redesign tenancy support for Whitefriars tenants; and, another in Willenhall will redesign children's services.
- 2.5 A key aspect of the Ignite Programme is an emphasis on sharing learning and promoting good practice across the city. This will be through an Early Action Resilience Centre, which provides an excellent opportunity for partners to share lessons, tools and techniques that emerge from the Ignite Programme and other initiatives to promote active citizenship.
- 2.6 Across the city a range of statutory, voluntary and community sector organisations actively support communities to form new groups, run events, encourage volunteering and access funding etc. These include the Coventry City Council Community Development Service, Public Health Insight Team, Voluntary Action Coventry, Coventry Law Centre, Grapevine, Coventry University, West Midlands Police, University of Warwick, Age UK, Whitefriars, Coventry Cathedral, Coventry and Rugby CCG and others, including through the Coventry Partnership.
- 2.7 A strategic group, has met three times to oversee implementation of the strategy, which included a range of partners from statutory, voluntary and community sectors. As a result it has become apparent that there are a wide range of initiatives already taking place across the city, which are promoting active citizenship and using asset-based approaches.
- 2.8 It also highlighted a top-down management style of implementation of the strategy to be problematic. Realisation of the strategic aim requires changing the culture and practice within organisations as well as re-focussing relationships with communities. Implementation relies on a fundamental letting-go of power by managers and employees within organisations and development of different and more personal relationships with active citizens; employees in organisations need to work alongside, encourage and devolve responsibility to citizens.
- 2.9 It will also require considerable collaboration amongst organisations from all sectors to ensure that scarce resources needed to support and encourage communities are utilised as effectively as possible.
- 2.10 **Social Enterprise Update**
- 2.11 Following the round table event in October 2014 two further meetings took place in 2015 involving representatives from social enterprises, support organisations, universities, housing associations and Council. After the first meeting in January 2015 a small sub group met to consider the benefits and first steps for Coventry to become a social enterprise city. The group made recommendation to the wider group where there was a commitment to make sure that future plans had clear benefits for the city and social enterprise in particular. The aim of future work would be to grow the size and scale of existing social enterprises, create new social enterprises and overall grow the size of the social economy in Coventry.

2.12 Growing social enterprise in the city could have a number of potential benefits that would contribute to the Council Plan priorities and also to the Active Citizens, Strong Communities Strategy. These include:

Economic benefits

- more people employed by social enterprises and more income being generated
- more good quality jobs for local people
- improved retention of money within the local economy by raising the profile of social enterprise and encouraging inter trading between social enterprises
- contributing to the growth of the entrepreneurial culture of the city by identifying new talent and retaining existing talent.
- finding new models for the delivery of public services.

Raising the Profile of Social Enterprise within the city

- Increased understanding of social enterprise amongst mainstream business and the wider public.
- To inspire and involve all parts of the community in entrepreneurial activity

Building Community Capacity

- Enabling communities to grow their capacity to take control of their own futures by the use of social enterprise.
- Finding ways of allowing social enterprises to strengthen our diverse communities

2.13 Early engagement with the wider social enterprise sector is an important next stage. Initial research suggests that there are over 200 social enterprises in the city and these need to be engaged with quickly to get buy in and support. There are two key activities currently being planned by partners:

- A networking event to engage with the wider sector, planned for late 2015 and co-ordinated by a lead from Coventry University.
- Creation of a steering group to oversee the development of the Social Enterprise City programme. Ideally this would be a highly influential group including social enterprises and partners capable of leading change in key areas of activity across the city. Invitations to the steering group would follow from the networking event.

2.14 The Council has also looked at its own procurement procedures to make it as easy as possible for social enterprise to access information and compete for contracts for Council goods and services. It will also take steps to raise manager's awareness to encourage them to consider social enterprise as part of their purchasing decisions.

2.15 Recommended proposal

2.16 It is proposed to bring back a revised Active Citizens, Strong Communities implementation plan for consideration by the cabinet member by December 2015, which is based on the learning from Mutual Gain and the Ignite Programme.

2.17 The plan will include proposals for optimising the use of the Early Action Resilience Centre for sharing learning and promoting good practice and proposals to report progress to the cabinet member.

2.18 It will also build upon developments happening through the Coventry Partnership, which is developing a web-based presence that provides information, opportunities and encouragement for collaboration within communities and with organisations.

2.19 Future work will build upon current engagement activity already taking place across the city, including through Coventry Partnership and organisations listed in paragraph 2.6

2.20 It is proposed that the growth of social enterprise in the City becomes a part of the Active Citizens, Strong Communities strategy. This will maximise opportunities for partnership, networking and engagement.

2.21 An alternative option would be to continue to implement the Active Citizens, Strong Communities strategy in the current fashion. This option is not recommended as it would be less effective than learning from implementation to date.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

3.1 An event was held with participants of the Transforming Communities, With Communities Programme along with representatives from Coventry City Council and partner organisations. There was consensus that partners should work together to change the way that community engagement takes place.

3.2 There have been three meetings involving social enterprise and partners to explore views and engage with interested parties to shape the growth of social enterprise. The resulting programme for a social enterprise city will be sector lead with contribution from the Council.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

4.1 It is proposed to bring back a revised implementation plan by December 2015 that will enable the City Council, with its partner organisations, to realise the strategic vision.

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Legal Services

5.1 Financial implications

There are no specific financial implications resulting from the reports proposals. Implementation of the Strategy is taking place in the context of continued cuts to Government resources for local government and it is anticipated that the Strategy will complement the aim of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy in trying to manage within the reduced level of resources that it faces.

5.2 Legal implications

There are no specific legal implications

6. Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

This report recommends bringing back a revised implementation plan that will strengthen the ability of the Council to work collaboratively with partner organisations and residents to achieve the Council's key objectives, specifically to *Deliver our priorities with fewer resources; Making the most of our assets; Active citizens, strong involved communities.*

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Risks are identified and managed through an implementation plan and through regular reports to the Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

There are no impacts at this stage.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

There are no equality impacts at this stage, however a key aspiration of the future approach to building effective collaborative relationships will be to ensure that those groups of people with protected characteristics or who live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are actively encouraged to get involved and equalities will be strongly incorporated in any approach taken. This will be reflected in the revised implementation plan.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

The revised implementation plan will build upon developments happening through the Coventry Partnership and the Ignite Programme and will be developed with partner organisations. This will further strengthen partnership working in the city.

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This report is published on the council's website:

www.coventry.gov.uk/meetings

Appendix: Active Citizens; Strong and Involved Communities Implementation Plan Update October 2015

Key Pillar	Action	Lead(s)	Milestones	Update
1. Building Capacity	Develop a voluntary sector-led Centre of Excellence	Law Centre Grapevine	Programme Launch Oct 2015	The Ignite Programme was launched on 1.10.15 and will include setting up and Early Action Resilience Centre, which will share lessons, techniques and encourage good practice across the city.
	(New) Develop a citywide database of community groups and resources to make it easy for people to identify community assets Produce an electronic city-wide map of assets for use in planning service changes and community engagement (new)	Coventry City Council (CCC) – Community Development Service CCC - Insight Team / CDS	Published March 2015	Community Activities Directory has been published on the Council's website: www.coventry.gov.uk/cad and is well used. An electronic map has been developed, to visualise activities taking place at locality level and will be useful for community engagement events and strategic impact assessments.
2. Co-Designing and Co-Delivering Local Services	Introduce and test co-production through People Directorate (supported through the Transforming Communities With Communities Action Learning Sets and the Community Development Service)	CCC - Insight Team		Action learning sets focussed upon allocation of section 106 money and neighbourhood planning, not People Directorate services. An update on the Transforming Communities With Communities Programme is given below in the section <i>Supporting Staff to Work Differently</i>
	Support and test co-production in a) Parks	CCC – Parks		An action plan is to be produced, Community Development Team is assisting Graham Hood in producing a Gold/Silver/Bronze service level agreement by early Nov and then further discussions with the 'Friends of Spencer Park' will be arranged.
	b) Preventative support for older people (integrated neighbourhood team)	Coventry and Rugby CCG		The service is currently being commissioned and due to be live by December 2015. The service

Key Pillar	Action	Lead(s)	Milestones	Update
				specification was developed in partnership with voluntary and community sector organisations
	c) Age-Friendly City	CCC- Public Health/ Coventry University/ Age UK		The age friendly programme began formally in October 2014. A variety of activities and events have been conducted in order to achieve the WHO outputs for year 1 including the establishment of a governance board, a scoping study across existing Age Friendly Cities in the UK, identifying organisations who will be key to implementing plans, raising awareness, working closely with Coventry Older Voices and a baseline assessment Three partnership themed working groups have been established for the selected priority areas, with involvement of older people to develop detailed themed action plans to make improvements in the areas raised and to oversee their implementation and evaluation.
	d) (New) Places of Welcome	Whitefriars	Develop 20 Places of Welcome by Dec 15 Launch January 2016 Case study/film to be produced to highlight lessons that can be applied to other service areas	New initiative building upon Birmingham initiative. It aims to connect socially isolated people, sharing local information via a network of small community organisations, including faith communities, who offer an unconditional welcome to local people for at least a few hours a week.
3. Supporting Staff to Work	Deliver the Transforming Communities With Communities	Insight, CCC	Training completed and action learning	The programme has been delivered, including training in these techniques:

Key Pillar	Action	Lead(s)	Milestones	Update
Differently	<p>Programme</p> <p>Cheylesmore Participatory Budgeting Event</p> <p>Willenhall Appreciative Inquiry Event</p>	<p>Insight Team/CDS/Mutual Gain</p>	<p>sets initiated by Sep 15</p> <p>3 training and development sessions and the event July 18th</p> <p>Appreciative Inquiry Event June 13th</p> <p>Download learning and agree next steps Sept 2015</p>	<p>appreciative inquiry, focus groups, social media engagement, service co-design and co-production.</p> <p>Two action learning sets were delivered across two neighbourhoods. In Cheylesmore an asset mapping event was held to involve residents in identifying the strengths and resources in the community and to explore aspirations. A community planning group, including all three ward councillors, was recruited and it developed and organised a participatory budgeting process, which culminated in a 'voting day' to allocate section 106 money to community bids for funding. In Willenhall focus groups were held to understand why some demographic groups are much less likely to participate in neighbourhood planning activities. A subsequent appreciative inquiry event engaged local residents who had not previously been involved in developing a neighbourhood plan.</p> <p>A download day was held to share learning and ideas about how to roll out good practice across the city with key stakeholders</p> <p>This action will be supported by the Early Action Resilience Centre, who will run events to promote asset based working and earlier intervention, and will encourage sharing</p>

Key Pillar	Action	Lead(s)	Milestones	Update
	Identify and promote local champions within key services/ agencies to lead on nurturing and promoting asset based working within their organisation - drawing on the programme above	Law Centre Grapevine	Champions identified by January 2015	of learning
	Develop proposals for training and workforce development that shares skills across the public and voluntary sector	CCC – Workforce Development & VAC	Training & development proposals agreed by March 15	The Workforce Services Team have just launched their new corporate Learning & Development offer. Plans to work with other organisations in the City are underway. Voluntary Action Coventry have offered to provide a work placement for a participant on the Aspiring Leaders programme.
	Work with the voluntary sector to identify what 'good' looks like	CCC- Insight / VAC	Voluntary sector led workshops to be complete by March 2015	Voluntary Action Coventry Innovation Awards 2015 resulted in 9 award winners: <i>Building resilience in individuals without creating dependence</i> winners: Grapevine / Law Centre; Kairos WWT, Valley House, Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre. <i>Helping people to access the right preventative services before an issue becomes a crisis</i> winners: Coventry CAB; Coffee Tots; Crossroads; FWT <i>Demonstrating a new business model</i> winner: Positive Youth Foundation
4. Working with local statutory and voluntary	Lead and support development of an Early Action Funding bid	Coventry Law Centre, Grapevine, Insight CCC, Whitefriars,	Bid submitted by Nov 15	The bid was successful and implementation has begun, including recruitment and appointment of a

Key Pillar	Action	Lead(s)	Milestones	Update
sector partners to access external funding		CCG	Funders decision by Mar 15	Programme Manager and Ignite workers. A launch conference was held on 1 October and work has started work with children's services and Whitefriars to begin to plan the start of the work.
	Our Place Application – Diabetes demonstration site (New)	Coventry Cathedral	Bid submitted May 15	Bid was successful. This project will extend the engagement and innovation approach used in the successful Ripple Project and provides a platform to help redesign (co-produce) services for individuals with Type 2 diabetes.
5. Learning and Review	Gather in learning from the initiatives above and review priorities for future implementation of the strategy	Insight, CCC	Develop and agree research support to evaluate this programme Report progress and recommendations for future priority actions to cabinet members by Dec 15	Recommendation is to share learning and develop evaluation techniques through the Early Action Resilience Centre (EARC) Learning will be regularly disseminated via the EARC and the intention is to stimulate change by building support in the form of a social movement. a report back will be made in December 2016 It is proposed to bring back recommendations by December 2015 This report sets out progress made and it is proposed to provide a further report setting out priority actions for the future by Dec 15

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Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)
Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and
Social Enterprise

4th Nov 2015

13th Nov 2015

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise -
Councillor Abbott

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director of Place

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title:

Coventry Homefinder Policy – 12 month review

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

Coventry Homefinder is the choice based lettings system used to allocate social housing in Coventry. The Coventry Homefinder Policy sets out who can register, how properties are advertised, and who is given priority for social housing in the city. Coventry Homefinder was first established in September 2007.

A new Coventry Homefinder Policy was approved by Cabinet in April 2014 and was implemented from 31st July 2014. This report gives an update of the first 12 months of operation of the new Policy, along with analysis of the effects of the changes on the Homefinder Register and the allocation of available properties.

Recommendations:

The Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) is recommended to:

- 1) Consider the content of the report and forward any comments to the Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise.
- 2) Support the recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise as proposed below.

The Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise is recommended to:

- 1) Consider any comments from the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4).

- 2) Request that officers negotiate a more detailed agreement for identifying the mix of properties that Partner Registered Providers can allocate within the existing policy, whereby 10% of properties advertised can be prioritised for existing tenants of that Registered Provider.
- 3) Provide guidance and instruction regarding the assessment of customers' needs where potential adapted accommodation is required and where the present housing is reported to be inadequate due to health concerns.
- 4) Approve the proposed addition to the Policy regarding applicants who are currently social tenants and who do not have a local connection, who need to move for work related purposes, as set out at paragraph 2.47.
- 5) Request that officers carry out customer consultation/survey (including vulnerable customers) to establish satisfaction levels with the service.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1 - Results of data analysis
 Appendix 2 – Equalities and Consultation Analysis (ECA)

Background Documents:

None

Other useful documents:

The Coventry Homefinder Choice Based Lettings Policy is available on the Coventry Homefinder website: www.coventryhomefinder.com

‘Coventry Homefinder Choice Based Lettings Policy 2014’ - Report to Cabinet, 10th April 2014. Available:

<http://democraticservices.coventry.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=124&MId=10154>

Report back from the Homefinder Task & Finish Group – Recommendations to the Transport and Infrastructure Development Scrutiny Board, 13th March 2013. Available:

<http://moderngov.coventry.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=158&MId=9627&Ver=4>

‘Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Authorities in England’ – Department for Communities and Local Government, June 2012. Available from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/allocation-of-accommodation-guidance-for-local-housing-authorities-in-england>

‘Right to Move: statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local housing authorities in England’ – Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2015. Available from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/right-to-move-statutory-guidance-on-social-housing-allocations-for-local-housing-authorities-in-england>

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

Yes – Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) on 4th November 2015

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Coventry Homefinder Policy – 12 month review

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 Coventry Homefinder is the choice based lettings (CBL) system by which the majority of social housing in Coventry is allocated. The Coventry Homefinder Policy sets out who can register, how properties are advertised and who is given priority for social housing in the city. The Coventry Homefinder CBL system has operated since September 2007.
- 1.2 The Council no longer owns any housing following the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of all the former Council housing to Whitefriars Housing Group in 2000. The local authority is still statutorily required to have an allocation scheme for determining how allocations are made, in order that those who have the greatest need for housing are prioritised. Coventry Homefinder is therefore a partnership between Coventry City Council and Registered Providers of social housing (mostly Housing Associations). The Homefinder Partner landlords are referred to throughout this report as Partner Registered Providers.
- 1.3 People who want to move to a social home in Coventry can register with Coventry Homefinder. A banding system is used to give priority to people who have a recognised housing need (such as being homeless, being overcrowded, fleeing violence etc) over those who are already adequately housed.
- 1.4 Available social housing properties are advertised each week and applicants can express an interest in (bid on) properties that they want to be considered for. At the end of each bidding period, an automatic system shortlist is created of all the applicants that have bid on the property, based on the band (level of housing need) and effective date (the length of time the applicant has been in housing need). The Partner Registered Provider then offers the property to applicants in order of the shortlist.
- 1.5 Following changes to legislation and statutory guidance, a new Coventry Homefinder Policy was developed and was approved by Cabinet at the meeting on 10th April 2014. This Policy was then implemented from 31st July 2014.
- 1.6 This report gives an update of the first 12 months of operation of the new Policy, along with analysis of the effects that the changes have had on the Homefinder Register and the allocation of available properties.
- 1.7 Additional statutory guidance has been released by the Government in March 2015, regarding the 'Right to Move' for certain social housing tenants, meaning that further minor changes to the Policy are necessary.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 Analysis has been carried out to identify what effect the changes to the Coventry Homefinder Policy (implemented on 31st July 2014) have had on the make-up of the register and the allocation of available properties, during the first 12 months of operation.
- 2.2 The results of this analysis are set out in detail in Appendix 1. The main points of relevance include:
- 2.3 Priority for all properties is now based on Band and Effective Date. The intention of this policy was to ensure that applicants with the greatest housing need (in the highest band)

who have been in housing need the longest (the earliest 'effective date') are prioritised for properties above other applicants.

- 2.4 71% of properties advertised in the 12 months after implementation were let to applicants in priority bands 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B and 2C (with an assessed housing need). In the 12 months before the implementation of this policy, only 58% of properties were let to applicants in the priority bands.
- 2.5 Applicants without a housing need (in Bands 3A and 3B) are less likely to successfully bid for a property. However, with the shortage of social housing in the city, the Policy intends to support those who are currently homeless or in unsuitable housing over those who are suitably housed but want to move. The Government's statutory guidance states: "we expect social homes to go to people who genuinely need them".
- 2.6 There was concern that this policy change would result in an increase in applicants requesting an assessment for priority banding, or deliberately worsening their circumstances, however performance figures for the Homefinder Team show that there has not been a significant increase. We cannot tell from the information available whether there are households who do not have any housing needs who have been deterred from registering.
- 2.7 Additional priority is given to members/former members of the Armed Forces who have a housing need which would place them in a priority band. Armed Forces applicants are placed one band higher than their housing circumstances would normally require.
- 2.8 Nine households have been given this additional priority in the 12 months since implementation. Seven of these households were housed within that time.
- 2.9 The Band for applicants who are homeless and living in hostel accommodation was increased from Band 2B to Band 2A, to enable them to move into permanent accommodation more quickly (as the nature of the hostel accommodation is that it is short term) and to free up spaces within the hostels more rapidly.
- 2.10 212 people with hostel priority were housed in the 12 months following implementation, with mean average of 129 days between their effective date and an offer of accommodation (this includes some long term residents that have been assisted to move out – the median was 88 days). This compares with 164 people with hostel priority housed in the 12 months before the policy was implemented.
- 2.11 The Band for applicants experiencing or at serious risk of violence, harassment or abuse was increased from Band 2B to Band 1B, in order to enable them to move more quickly. Ten applicants received this higher band in the 12 months after implementation, and seven of these were also housed during this time.
- 2.12 An additional category for tenants of Partner Registered Providers who are under-occupying their current property by three or more bedrooms was added to Band 1A. This was to allow people who are under-occupying large family homes to move to smaller homes more quickly, freeing up those larger homes for families on the register and reducing the potential impact of the 'bedroom tax' on under-occupiers. Three households have been awarded this priority. Two have successfully been housed. The two properties released by these applicants were both four bedroom houses that have now been re-let to families who were homeless.

- 2.13 An additional category was also added to Band 1A for households who needed to move as part of the National Witness Mobility Scheme. One household has received this priority and has been housed.
- 2.14 An additional category was included in Band 2A covering the reasonable preference category (from legislation) for households who need to move to a particular location to relieve or avoid hardship.
- 2.15 No households have been given priority under this category. There is considerable overlap in the guidance between this category and the reasonable preference category for people who need to move to a particular location for social and welfare reasons, and so many applicants who apply for this priority are placed in the band under the social/welfare category instead. However, the hardship category is included to comply with legislation and ensure that cases which do not come under social/welfare category can be included (for example, needing to move for work-related purposes). One advice agency has highlighted this as a potential issue, that the meaning of the hardship priority criteria may be unclear to applicants. However, every applicant that applies for priority banding has their circumstances assessed, and they will be placed in the most appropriate band according to their circumstances.
- 2.16 Applicants who are successful in their bidding and are offered a property, but who then refuse that property without good reason on more than five occasions, are suspended from the register. So far, nine applicants have had their applications suspended for this reason.
- 2.17 10% of properties prioritised for existing tenants**
- 2.18 Following the changes to the policy in 2014, all properties now have their shortlists ordered based on the band and effective date of the applicants that placed a bid. This ensures that the applicants in greatest housing need for the longest time are prioritised above others.
- 2.19 However, in order to ensure that existing tenants also have the opportunity to move, Partner Registered Providers can advertise 10% of their properties with priority within the shortlist for their existing tenants.
- 2.20 The data analysis shows that this has been used by Whitefriars for 131 properties during the 12 months following implementation. This is out of a total of 1665 properties advertised by Whitefriars, so equates to 8% of properties advertised. This is well within the policy, however when this is analysed by the size of the property, it becomes apparent that three bedroom properties are over-represented. 71 out of 245 three bedroom houses were advertised with existing tenant priority (29%). Over half of all properties advertised with existing tenant priority (71 out of 131) were three-bedroom properties.
- 2.21 Of the 132 properties advertised with existing tenant priority, 115 were let to existing tenants who also had a housing need. The majority of these (77) were due to overcrowding.
- 2.22 Option 1 – keep the policy as it is with no further guidance on the mix of properties advertised with existing tenant priority.
- 2.23 Option 2 – negotiate with Partner Registered Providers to develop an agreed mix of properties that can be advertised with existing tenant priority, to make sure that this is representative of the overall mix of properties and that no particular property type is overrepresented.

2.24 The Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise is recommended to request that officers negotiate a more detailed agreement for identifying the mix of properties that Partner Registered Providers can allocate within the existing policy whereby 10% of properties advertised can be prioritised for existing tenants of that Registered Provider.

2.25 Adapted Properties and medical priority

2.26 The changes to the Policy made in 2014 included a change to the way that adapted properties and those purpose-built for wheelchair users are advertised and allocated.

2.27 Previously, these properties were advertised on the Homefinder website when they became available, and applicants who had an assessed need for an adapted property were able to place bids. However, this often resulted in applicants placing bids on properties where the adaptations were not suitable for their needs, or no bids being received. This meant that properties were being advertised for several weeks, and in some instances were eventually let as general needs properties and adaptations removed.

2.28 The Partner Registered Providers have raised this change as a particular issue for them. In practice, they report that there has been no reduction in the time taken to re-let adapted properties, and there are still instances where adaptations are removed from properties as no suitable applicant can be found. Applicants put forward for consideration as their needs meet the adaptations often refuse the property based on the location.

2.29 We will continue to work with Partner Registered Providers and applicants to improve the recording and matching process, and explore ways to encourage applicants to consider a wider choice of areas when adapted properties become available.

2.30 It should be noted that applicants who require an adapted property are also able to place bids on the general needs properties advertised on Homefinder alongside other applicants. If they are placed at the top of the shortlist, the Landlord would then need to assess whether it is possible and reasonable for that property to be adapted for the applicant's needs.

2.31 The policy also strengthened the process for assessing whether applicants had a medical need, stating that an Occupational Therapist (OT) assessment should be carried out (where appropriate) in order to give an expert opinion on what the needs of the applicant are, and also whether aids and adaptations could be provided in their existing home.

2.32 This was identified as a risk in the report which went to Cabinet on 15th April 2014, with the risk that the OT service may not be able to provide this increased level of service within a reasonable timeframe. The risk was mitigated by communication with the OT service and assurances that the additional work could be carried out.

2.33 It was anticipated that there would be a reduction in households requiring alternative housing as a result of OT assessments, as some homes would be able to be made suitable with the provision of aids and adaptations.

2.34 However, since implementation, the OT services have not been able to meet the demand for this assessment, resulting in very few assessments being carried out.

2.35 Applications for priority banding due to medical needs have not been delayed because of this difficulty. The Homefinder Officers are, however, having to base their decisions on self-reported information and supporting information from relevant medical providers (such as

GPs). Where an OT assessment has already been carried out, these are used to ensure appropriate banding and whether an adapted property is required.

- 2.36 The Cabinet Member is recommended to provide guidance and instruction regarding the assessment of customers' needs where potential adapted accommodation is required and where the present housing is reported to be inadequate due to health concerns.

2.37 'Right to Move' statutory guidance

- 2.38 The Government issued statutory guidance in March 2015 on the 'Right to Move', aimed at enabling existing social tenants to move to an area where they have no current local connection, when they need to avoid or relieve hardship by taking up a firm offer of employment (not short-term or marginal) or an apprenticeship.

- 2.39 This is guidance that the Local Authority must 'have regard to' when formulating the allocations policy, but it is not additional legislation or a change to existing legislation.

- 2.40 The guidance states that applicants who are currently social housing tenants, who need to move between local authority areas for work related reasons, should not be excluded from the register because they do not have a local connection to the area.

- 2.41 Coventry Homefinder has an 'open' register and does not disqualify applicants who do not have a local connection from joining the register. The current Coventry Homefinder Policy, therefore, complies with this part of the guidance and no changes are required.

- 2.42 The guidance also states that a quota of properties should be made available for this group each year, but if the local authority decides not to implement a quota, it should publicly state its reasons. The guidance considers that an appropriate quota may be 1% of available properties.

- 2.43 Feedback from the Partner Registered Providers shows support for the principle of assisting social tenants under the 'Right to Move' provisions, but that setting aside a quota of properties is not appropriate.

- 2.44 There is very little evidence that there is any significant demand, and any properties set aside for the quota may be left empty for longer than necessary if suitable applicants cannot be found.

- 2.45 It would be possible instead to clarify within the current policy that the Hardship category can include existing tenants who need to move for work-related purposes.

- 2.46 Option 1 – To change the Coventry Homefinder Policy to require that 1% of properties that become available each year are set aside for existing social tenants without a local connection who need to move for work-related reasons. This option is not recommended for the reasons set out above.

- 2.47 Option 2 – To retain the current provisions in the Coventry Homefinder Policy, without setting a quota, but to add the following paragraph to section 3.14 of the current Homefinder Policy: "The Government has issued guidance regarding the 'Right to Move' for current social housing tenants who need to move to another district (where they have no local connection) for work-related purposes, to avoid hardship. The guidance suggests a quota of 1% of available properties is set aside for this group. As Coventry City Council is no longer a stock-holding authority, a quota of properties will not be provided; this will be impractical to implement with our partner organisations and risks properties being left

vacant. Applicants in this group will be assessed under the current hardship priority category where appropriate.”

- 2.48 The Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise is recommended to approve the proposed addition to the Policy regarding applicants who are currently social tenants and who do not have a local connection, who need to move for work related purposes, as set out in paragraph 2.47

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 During the development of the Coventry Homefinder Policy, consultation was carried out in several stages with Registered Providers, advice agencies, relevant council services, Councillors, applicants already registered with Homefinder, and the general public through the Council website. Details of this consultation can be found in the ECA attached as Appendix 2 and in the report which was presented to Cabinet on 15th April 2014.
- 3.2 In order to now assess the impacts of the policy changes, data analysis has been carried out on both the Homefinder Register and the properties that became available in the 12 months since implementation. This has been presented to the Coventry Homefinder Partnership Board.
- 3.3 This data was also used as a basis for a consultation document which was sent out to Partner Registered Providers, advice agencies, and relevant Council services, showing the effect of the changes and asking for comments. The data analysis and a summary of the responses received are attached as Appendix 1.
- 3.4 The results of this consultation showed that the majority of the Policy changes have achieved their stated aim. The Partner Registered Providers are happy with the majority of the changes made, with the exception of the way that adapted properties are now allocated. This has been addressed in the main body of the report (2.25).
- 3.5 There has not been an increase in complaints to the advice agency that responded to the consultation as a result of the changes to the policy, and they believe the new policies seem to be achieving their stated aims. Concern was raised about the lack of understanding that applicants have of the hardship priority, which may be the reason for the lack of applications for this priority category.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 If approved, recommendation 2 and 5 will be implemented within 12 months.
- 4.2 If approved, recommendation 4 will be implemented by adding the agreed paragraph to the Coventry Homefinder Policy with effect from 7th December 2015.

5. Comments from Executive Director of Resources

- 5.1 Financial implications
There are no specific financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report. There was a one-off cost of approximately £4000 for changes to the computer system required as a result of the changes to the policy, which was met from existing resources.
- 5.2 Legal implications
Under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 the Council, is required to have an allocation scheme which needs to include the Council's policy on offering those to be allocated housing a

choice of housing accommodation or an opportunity to express preferences for accommodation.

Following the changes to social housing allocations made by the Localism Act 2011, the new statutory guidance "Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for local housing authorities in England" was published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in June 2012. This replaced all previous guidance on social housing allocation. Housing Authorities are required to have regard to this guidance in exercising their functions under Part 6 of the 1996 Act.

Secondary legislation has also been made through the statutory instruments 'Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) 2012' and 'The Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012', which affects the way that certain former members of the Armed Forces and their families are given access to the housing register and preference on the housing register.

The 'Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015' came into force on 20th April 2015, which provide that local authorities must not disqualify certain persons with the 'Right to Move' on the grounds that they do not have a local connection with the authority's district.

Statutory guidance on the Right to Move also strongly encourages local authorities to set aside a quota of 1% of available properties for applicants in this group who require a cross-boundary move. Local authorities should publish the quota as part of their allocation scheme, together with their rationale for adopting the specific percentage. Where less than 1% is proposed, local authorities should explain why they have chosen to do so. The Council is required to have regard to this guidance and should be prepared to justify any departure from it.

6. Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

The Coventry Homefinder Choice Based Lettings Policy supports the Council Plan objectives: to increase the supply, choice and quality of housing; and to protect and support the most vulnerable people, including preventing homelessness and helping people who do become homeless.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

The Policy has had regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance and has been developed following a robust consultation process. There is always the risk of challenge to a Council decision; however this risk will be minimised by a policy meeting statutory requirements.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

None

6.4 Equalities / EIA

An Equalities and Consultation Assessment (ECA) was carried out in 2014 at the time that the changes were proposed and the new Policy was implemented. This has been updated following the first 12 months of implementation, showing the effects of the policy changes on protected groups, and is attached as Appendix 2 to this report (12 month update is page 34 onwards).

71% of properties advertised in the 12 months after implementation were let to applicants in priority bands 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B and 2C (with an assessed housing need). In the 12 months before the implementation of this policy, only 58% of properties were let to applicants in the priority bands. Applicants in the priority bands may be in any of the protected characteristic groups, but as the data in the ECA shows, certain groups are more likely to be registered with Coventry Homefinder and/or are more likely to have a housing need.

The increase in the proportion of properties that are let to applicants in housing need is therefore a positive impact.

This does mean that applicants without a housing need (in Bands 3A and 3B) are less likely to successfully bid for a property. However, with the shortage of social housing in the city, the Policy intends to support those who are currently homeless or in unsuitable housing over those who are suitably housed but want to move. The Government's statutory guidance states: "we expect social homes to go to people who genuinely need them".

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

The Council no longer owns any housing following the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of all the former Council housing to Whitefriars Housing Group in 2000. The local authority is still required to have an allocation scheme for determining how allocations are made in order that those who have the greatest need for housing are prioritised. Coventry Homefinder is therefore a partnership between Coventry City Council and Registered Providers (mostly Housing Associations) in the city.

The Coventry Homefinder Policy determines how applicants who express an interest in a property are prioritised, which therefore impacts on the Registered Provider which then receives the shortlist determining who should be offered the property (subject to the Provider's own tenancy checks).

Registered Providers and other partner organisations were involved in consultation throughout the process and the changes to the policy have been discussed at the Coventry Homefinder Partnership Board meetings.

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Members: Councillor Faye Abbott	Cabinet Member	Coventry City Council	07/10/2015	15/10/2015
Councillor Tariq Khan	Chair of Scrutiny Board (4)	Coventry City Council	07/10/2015	15/10/2015

This report is published on the council's website:

www.coventry.gov.uk/councilmeetings

Appendices

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Coventry Homefinder Policy Review – 12 months from Implementation

Coventry Homefinder is the system used to allocate social housing in Coventry. The Coventry Homefinder Policy sets out who can register, how properties are advertised and who is given priority for social housing in the City.

The new Coventry Homefinder Policy was approved by Cabinet in April 2014 and was implemented from 31st July 2014. We are carrying out a review of the effect that the policy changes have had during the first full 12 months of implementation. Some information regarding each of the policy changes and the impact that they have had on the register are described below.

Comparison of the Homefinder Register before and after implementation:

	As at 31st July 2014	As at 31st July 2015
Band 1A	59	57
Band 1B	63	39
Band 2A	960	1042
Band 2B	235	134
Band 2C	358	279
Band 3A	12,037	11,840
Band 3B	513	366
Total	14,225	13,757

		As at 31st July 2014	As at 31st July 2015
Bands 1A to 2C (housing need)	Number	1,675	1,551
	% of register	11.8%	11.3%
Bands 3A and 3B	Number	12,550	12,206
	% of register	88.2%	88.7%

Information on the effects of the Policy changes:

All properties have their shortlist prioritised by housing need (band)	
Previous Policy: 75% of properties had their shortlists ordered based on the priority band of the bidders who expressed an interest, 25% had their shortlists ordered based on registration date alone.	
Current Policy: All properties advertised have their shortlists ordered based on the priority band (and therefore, relative housing need) of the applicants that have bid.	
Intended effect: To ensure that applicants with a housing need are prioritised for housing above those that are already adequately housed.	
Baseline data (from 31st July 2014):	12 month review data (for 31st July 2015):
Successful bidders for properties advertised in the 12 months before implementation: 58% of properties advertised were accepted by applicants with a housing need (Bands 1A to 2C).	Successful bidders for properties advertised during 12 months after implementation: 71% of properties advertised were accepted by applicants with a housing need (Bands 1A to 2C).

Band of bidder	Number	Percentage	Band of bidder	Number	Percentage
Band 1A	450	21%	Band 1A	520	25%
Band 1B	67	3%	Band 1B	43	2%
Band 2A	399	18%	Band 2A	700	34%
Band 2B	185	9%	Band 2B	41	2%
Band 2C	159	7%	Band 2C	160	8%
Band 3A	897	41%	Band 3A	607	29%
Band 3B	9	0%	Band 3B	2	0%
Total	2166	100%	Total	2073	100%

Band of bidder	Number	Percentage	Band of bidder	Number	Percentage
Bands 1A to 2C	1260	58%	Bands 1A to 2C	1464	71%
Bands 3A & 3B	906	42%	Bands 3A & 3B	609	29%
Total	2166	100%	Total	2073	100%

10% of properties can be advertised with 'existing tenant priority'.																													
Previous Policy: There was no specific priority for existing tenants of Homefinder housing associations.																													
Current Policy: All shortlists are prioritised by band, but Partner Housing Associations are able to specify that priority be given to their current tenants within that shortlist for up to 10% of the properties advertised.																													
Intended effect: Existing tenants have the opportunity to move whilst also ensuring that those in housing need are prioritised, and housing associations can assist their tenants who are in housing need.																													
Baseline data (from 31st July 2014):	12 month review data (for 31st July 2015):																												
No properties were advertised with 'existing tenant priority' before the implementation of the policy. 23% of successful bidders in the 12 months prior to implementation had reported their previous tenure as 'renting from a housing association'.	Whitefriars is the only HA that has used this option on a regular basis (Stonewater has used it on one occasion). 132 properties have been advertised with existing tenant priority – this is 6% of the total number of properties. Whitefriars have advertised 131 properties, which equates to 8% of the properties they have advertised. The table below shows the Whitefriars property types and the number/percentage that were advertised with existing tenant priority.																												
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Property size</th> <th>Total advertised</th> <th>Number w exist tenant pri</th> <th>% of total w exist tenant pri</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Bedsit/Studio</td> <td>269</td> <td>0</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>One bedroom</td> <td>605</td> <td>27</td> <td>4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Two bedrooms</td> <td>526</td> <td>33</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Three bedrooms</td> <td>245</td> <td>71</td> <td>29%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Four bedrooms</td> <td>20</td> <td>0</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>1665</td> <td>131</td> <td>8%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Property size	Total advertised	Number w exist tenant pri	% of total w exist tenant pri	Bedsit/Studio	269	0	0%	One bedroom	605	27	4%	Two bedrooms	526	33	6%	Three bedrooms	245	71	29%	Four bedrooms	20	0	0%	Total	1665	131	8%
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Total	1665	131	8%																										

Introduction of the 'effective date' in shortlisting.

Previous Policy: The original date of registration was used to prioritise shortlists where more than one person in the same band had placed a bid. The registration date may have been a long time before the housing need arose.

Current Policy: Shortlisted bids in the same band are prioritised based on the 'effective date', which is the date that the band was awarded, reflecting how long the applicant has been in housing need rather than just the date that the applicant first registered.

Intended effect: This reflects how long the applicant has been in housing need rather than just how long they have been on the register. Applicants that have been *in housing need* for the longest period are prioritised.

Baseline data (from 31st July 2014):

The table below shows the average time from the registration date to an offer, for applicants that successfully bid for a property advertised in the 12 months before implementation:

Band	Average of days between reg. date and date offer made
Band 1A	367
Band 1B	295
Band 2A	701
Band 2B	347
Band 2C	466
Band 3A	883
Band 3B	411
Total	646

As effective date was not implemented until the policy change, there is no data regarding the time that applicants were in housing need for the period before implementation.

1283 households in priority bands were given an effective date that was different to their registration date. The average difference was 440 days.

12 month review data (for 31st July 2015):

The table below shows the average time from the effective date to an offer, for applicants that successfully bid for a property advertised in the 12 months since implementation:

Band	Average of days between effective date and date offer made
Band 1A	100
Band 1B	172
Band 2A	352
Band 2B	243
Band 2C	212
Band 3A	535
Band 3B	116
Total	326

Statutory Homeless Households – bids placed by Housing Officer

Previous Policy: Statutorily homeless households were placed in Band 1A for one bidding period and were able to place their own bids on properties. If they were unsuccessful, the Housing Assessment Officer then placed bids on their behalf until a successful match was made.

Current Policy: Statutorily homeless households are placed in Band 1A but bids will be placed by the Housing Assessment Officer, not the applicant, from the outset.

Intended effect: To maximise the chance of a successful match and reduce the amount of time before an offer of accommodation can be made.

Baseline data (from 31st July 2014):	12 month review data (for 31st July 2015):
<p>In the 12 months to policy change, there were 1080 homeless application decisions made, of which 596 were stat homeless</p> <p>As at 31st July 2014, 15 households were in Band 1A and active as they were stat homeless. 116 were stat homeless but in 'enquiries complete' as they had not been successful in their own bidding round.</p> <p>Overall, the average length of time from the date an applicant was accepted as statutorily homeless to the date that the duty was discharged was 57 days.</p> <p>For those that accepted a Part 6 offer of social housing (through Homefinder) the average was 59 days.</p> <p>For those that refused a Part 6 offer (through Homefinder) the average was 51 days.</p>	<p>In the 12 months after the policy change, there were 1003 homeless application decisions made, of which 613 were stat homeless.</p> <p>As at 31st July 2015, there were 97 households in Band 1A (status of enquiries complete) as they were stat homeless.</p> <p>Overall, the average length of time from the date an applicant was accepted as statutorily homeless to the date that the duty was discharged was 47 days.</p> <p>For those that accepted a Part 6 offer of social housing (through Homefinder) the average was 51 days.</p> <p>For those that refused a Part 6 offer (through Homefinder) the average was 35 days.</p>

Adapted properties – match to household needs
<p>Previous Policy: Adapted properties were categorised based on the level of adaptation and a brief description of adaptations provided. Applicants who were eligible could place bids and shortlists were created in the same way as for other properties.</p>
<p>Current Policy: Adapted properties are offered directly to people on the register who require the specific adaptations that are in the property (best match to adaptation requirements).</p>
<p>Intended effect: Ensure that the best fit is found between the adaptations provided and the needs of the household. Reduce the need for the property to be advertised multiple times until a suitable applicant bids. Reduce the need for adaptations to be taken out of a property if no suitable applicant bids.</p>
<p>12 month review data (for 31st July 2015):</p>
<p>56 households with an identified need for adaptations or wheelchair accessible properties were housed during the 12 months after implementation. Some of these were housed in 'general needs' housing (such as bungalows or ground floor flats without adaptations) where they were suitable for the household's needs.</p> <p>Partner Housing Associations – Please assist us to review this policy by letting us know the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are properties let to applicants whose needs most suitably fit the existing adaptations in the properties advertised? • Has the time taken to let adapted properties reduced? • Has there been a reduction in the need to remove adaptations from properties (as may have happened under the previous policy if no suitable applicants bid)?

Additional priority for members/former members of the Armed Forces
<p>Previous Policy: There were no additional priorities for former members of the armed forces over other applicants.</p>

Current Policy: Additional preference for former members of the armed forces that also have a reasonable preference housing need (priority band). Applicants are placed one band higher than their housing circumstances would normally require.	
Intended effect: to comply with new legislation and provide additional priority for Armed Forces	
Baseline data (from 31st July 2014):	12 month review data (for 31st July 2015):
No applicants had been awarded additional priority for Armed Forces service.	9 households have been given additional priority. 5 have so far been housed.

Band change – Hostel Priority.	
Previous Policy: Applicants in short term hostel accommodation were placed into Band 2B	
Current Policy: Applicants in short term hostel accommodation are placed into Band 2A	
Intended effect: Short term hostel accommodation is, by its nature, short term and so applicants need to move to other accommodation very quickly. The band was increased to facilitate this, to free up hostel spaces for further people who need them, and facilitate the operation of the services commissioned by the Council for homeless people that are not owed the full housing duty.	
Baseline data (from 31st July 2014):	12 month review data (for 31st July 2015):
<p>On 31st July 2014 there were 131 applicants in Band 2B as they were living in short term hostel accommodation.</p> <p>164 people with hostel priority were housed in the 12 months prior to the policy change.</p> <p>The average length of time on the register for those with hostel priority was 321 days (time since they entered hostel – equivalent to effective date - not available).</p>	<p>On 31st July 2015, there were 164 applicants in Band 2A as they were living in short term hostel accommodation.</p> <p>212 people with hostel priority were housed in the 12 months following implementation. The average number of days from their effective date to an offer of accommodation was 129 days.</p> <p>This included some applicants who had been living in Hostels for many years, who have now been assisted into accommodation.</p> <p>The median length of time for those with hostel priority was 88 days.</p>

Band change – Violence, Harassment and Abuse	
Previous Policy: Households experiencing/at serious risk of violence, harassment or abuse placed in Band 2B.	
Current Policy: The priority for these households was increased to Band 1B.	
Intended effect: To enable households suffering/ at serious risk of violence, harassment or abuse to move more quickly.	
Baseline data (from 31st July 2014):	12 month review data (for 31st July 2015):
5 households were in Band 2B as a result of this housing need at 31 st July 2014. Their band was increased to Band 1B under the new policy.	10 households have been placed in Band 1B in the 12 months due to violence/harassment/abuse – 7 of these have been housed.

Band change – under-occupying by 3 or more bedrooms

Previous Policy: The highest Band for under-occupiers was Band 1B for those under-occupying by two or more bedrooms (tenants of partner housing associations)

Current Policy: An additional category of households under-occupying by three or more bedrooms was created in Band 1A (for tenants of partner housing associations)

Intended effect: To allow those under-occupying very large family homes to move more quickly, freeing up those properties for other households on the register. To assist applicants who are affected by the ‘bedroom tax’ or who cannot manage a larger home.

Baseline data (from 31st July 2014):

There were no households with this specific priority

12 month review data (for 31st July 2015):

Three households have been awarded this priority. Two have been successfully housed. The two properties released were both four bedroom houses, which were subsequently let to large families who were statutorily homeless.

Band change – National Witness Mobility Scheme

Previous Policy: There was no specific banding category for applicants needing to move as part of the National Witness Mobility Scheme

Current Policy: This is specified as being Band 1A

Intended effect: To enable applicants who need to move as part of the National Witness Mobility Scheme to move more quickly.

Baseline data (from 31st July 2014):

Very few applicants needed to move as part of the National Witness Mobility Scheme, however those that did request this priority were dealt with under the homelessness assessment process.

12 month review data (for 31st July 2015):

One household has been assessed using this priority by the Housing Options Manager. This household has successfully moved.

Band change – addition of specific category for hardship

Previous Policy: There was no specific category for households that needed to move to avoid hardship.

Current Policy: The specific category has been included in Band 2A

Intended effect: Under the previous policy, most households needing to move due to hardship were assessed under the social/welfare category. The hardship category was included as a specific category to comply with legislation and ensure that cases which did not come under social/welfare categories were included (for example, financial hardship/needing to move for employment purposes).

Baseline data (from 31st July 2014):

There was no specific category under the previous policy.

12 month review data (for 31st July 2015):

There are no households who have been given priority in the hardship category.

Band change – extreme unsanitary conditions

Previous Policy: There is a category in Band 2B for applicants whose current housing is unsanitary or lacks essential facilities

Current Policy: There is an additional category in Band 1B for applicants who cannot stay in their home due to extreme unsanitary conditions causing severe health and safety hazards.

Intended effect: To enable applicants in extremely unsuitable housing to move more quickly. To introduce a level of priority for extreme cases.

Baseline data (from 31st July 2014):

12 month review data (for 31st July 2015):

There were no households with this specific priority

There are no households with this specific priority

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Equality and Consultation Analysis Template (ECA)

Guidance for completion

- Equality analysis is a way of considering the effect on different groups protected from discrimination by the Equality Act 2010, during the Council's decision making processes. These processes are:
 - Cabinet/Cabinet Member reports
 - Fundamental Service Reviews
 - Policy and Strategy Development
 - Human Resource Policies
 - Commissioning & Procurement
 - Other Service Reviews/Restructures
- These 'protected groups' are those defined by race, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief, pregnancy, maternity or breastfeeding and vulnerable communities for example Looked After Children, Homeless etc
- Remember to think about children and young people as a specific group that you may need to consider the impact on and engage with during this analysis.
- Equality analysis will help you to consider whether the decision you want to take:
 - Will have unintended consequences for some groups
 - If the service or policy will be fully effective for all target groups
- The Council also has a statutory duty to consult
- This ECA template will enable the Council to demonstrate how equality information and the findings from consultation with protected groups and others, have been used to understand the actual or potential effect of your service or policy on the protected groups and to inform decisions taken. Hence, it is an evidence trail to show how the Council has met statutory equality and consultation duties
- The template should summarise key issues arising from information that has been collected, analysed and included in other key documents eg. Needs Analysis, Baseline Reports etc
- This form should be completed on an on-going basis at each stage of any formal decision making process. Failure to comply with this will put the Council (and specifically the elected member or officer making the decision) at risk of judicial review.
- The Council also has a statutory duty to consider social value (Social, Economic and Environmental) when commissioning and procuring services

A simple guide to statutory consultation and equality duties sets out what the Council needs to do to comply with the **equality and consultation duties** and will help to deliver the best possible outcome for the City Council and its stakeholders. This can be found on http://beacon.coventry.gov.uk/downloads/download/507/simple_guide_to_statutory_consultation_and_equality_duties

For further help and support please contact Helen Shankster on 7683 4371 (Consultation Advice), Sheila Bates on 7683 1432 (CLYP Consultation Advice), Jaspal Mann 7683 3112 (Equalities Advice) Mick Burn 0247683 3757 (Social Value Advice).

Equality and Consultation Analysis

Context

Name of Review	Coventry Homefinder Choice Based Lettings Policy (review and re-write 2013-14)
Service Manager	Ayaz Maqsood
Officer completing analysis	Kimberley Fawcett
Date	January 2014

Scoping area of work

1. Briefly describe the area of work this analysis relates to:

Coventry City Council no longer owns or manages council housing stock, following the large scale voluntary transfer (LSVT) of all council housing to Whitefriars Housing Group in 2000. However, the Council still has a duty to produce a policy on how social housing

is allocated in the City which sets out how applicants are prioritised and how allocations are made, and which complies with Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Housing Act 2004 and the Localism Act 2011). The Policy must have regard to the guidance document 'Allocation of Accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England' (DCLG 2012).

As the Council no longer holds its own housing stock, allocations under the policy are carried out through nominations from the Council to Registered Providers of social housing.

The Coventry Homefinder Choice Based Lettings Policy sets out the policies and processes by which applicants will be prioritised for an allocation of social housing, and how available social housing vacancies are advertised and let.

Public Sector Equality Duty

2. Which, if any, parts of the general equality duty is the service relevant to? Please mark with an 'X'

	Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
x	Advance equality of opportunity between people who share relevant protected characteristics and those who do not
	Foster good relations between people who share relevant protected characteristics and those who do not

Gathering Information and Data

3. Who are the key groups that could be impacted by this work/service, including service users both existing and potential and stakeholders?

The key groups who may be affected by the Coventry Homefinder Policy include:

- Applicants for social housing in Coventry (this may include applicants who currently live outside of Coventry).

- Potential applicants for social housing in Coventry (this may include newly forming households, existing households, and those that currently live outside of Coventry).
- Members/former members of the Armed Forces who wish to apply for social housing in Coventry (and certain members of their families).
- Registered Providers of social housing in Coventry.

4. From the list above, which of these constitute protected groups or vulnerable communities (e.g. those experiencing deprivation)?

Within the groups identified in section 3, there are applicants/potential applicants with specific needs who may be affected by the Homefinder Policy, including:

- Applicants or members of their households who have a disability or medical need and whose current home is not suitable to meet the medical or disability needs of the household.
- Homeless people/households.
- Care leavers
- Applicants aged 16-17.
- Older applicants requiring sheltered housing.
- Households experiencing harassment or violence.

5. Which of the key protected groups and stakeholders representatives will need to be kept informed, consulted or actively involved in this area of work?

Key Stakeholder	*Type of Involvement	Method(s) used
Applicants who are currently registered with Coventry Homefinder	Informing and consulting	Formal 8 week public consultation on the draft policy – published on the Coventry Council website and the Coventry Homefinder website. Also publicised using Facebook and Twitter. Targeted emails to applicants that are currently registered (were an email address has been given on their application).

Potential applicants not yet registered with Coventry Homefinder	Informing and consulting	Formal 8 week public consultation on the draft policy – published on the Coventry Council website and the Coventry Homefinder website. Also publicised using Facebook and Twitter.
Homeless people/households	Informing and consulting	Formal 8 week public consultation on the draft policy – published on the Coventry Council website and the Coventry Homefinder website. Also publicised using Facebook and Twitter. Targeted emails to applicants that are currently registered (where an email address has been given on their application).
Disabled people with specific housing needs	Informing and consulting	Formal 8 week public consultation on the draft policy – published on the Coventry Council website and the Coventry Homefinder website. Also publicised using Facebook and Twitter. Targeted emails and contact with partnership and representative groups.
Registered Providers (social landlords) who are partners in Coventry Homefinder	Informing, consulting and involvement	<p>Informal focus group meetings on potential policy changes carried out prior to draft being prepared for public consultation.</p> <p>Homefinder Partnership Board meetings.</p> <p>Formal 8 week public consultation on the draft policy – published on the Coventry Council website and the Coventry Homefinder website. Targeted emails informing of the consultation.</p> <p>The final draft (following public consultation) will be circulated for comment.</p>
Advice agencies	Informing and consulting	<p>Focus group meetings carried out prior to draft being prepared for public consultation.</p> <p>Formal 8 week public consultation on the draft policy – published on the Coventry Council website and the Coventry Homefinder website. Targeted emails informing of the consultation.</p>

Providers of housing and homelessness services (eg hostels,	Informing and consulting	<p>Focus group meetings carried out prior to draft being prepared for public consultation.</p> <p>Formal 8 week public consultation on the draft policy – published on the Coventry Council website and the Coventry Homefinder website. Targeted emails informing of the consultation.</p>
Other council departments (eg Housing Benefit, Community Safety, Occupational Therapy)	Informing and consulting	<p>Focus group meetings carried out prior to draft being prepared for public consultation.</p> <p>Formal 8 week public consultation on the draft policy – published on the Coventry Council website and the Coventry Homefinder website. Targeted emails informing of the consultation.</p>
Elected members - Councillors	Inform, consult and involve.	<p>Task & Finish group set up by Scrutiny Board made recommendations on changes to the policy.</p> <p>Cabinet Member heard these recommendations and instructed officers to review and re-write the policy.</p> <p>Scrutiny Board will review the final draft policy before it is presented to Cabinet for approval.</p> <p>Also informed of the 8 week public consultation through email and members' bulletin.</p>

* *Information, Consultation or Involvement*

Analysis

6. What information is currently available to be used as part of this analysis including data on current and potential service user, workforce etc?

Comprehensive data is available from the current Homefinder register including:

- Ethnic origin of main applicant.
- Age group of main applicant.
- Applicants who require properties with mobility-related adaptations.
- Applicants who consider themselves to be vulnerable.
- Applicants who are unable to use the Homefinder system and require assisted bidding.

Data is also available on applicants who have been assessed as Statutorily Homeless (under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996) and who are owed the main housing duty – the Council must secure an offer of suitable accommodation for them. This can be done with an offer of accommodation under Part 6 of the 1996 Act (and therefore done through the Homefinder Policy). The information held about statutorily homeless households includes:

- Ethnic Origin of main applicants
- Age group of main applicant
- Whether the household contains dependent children or a pregnancy
- Household composition (including gender if the applicant is a single person or a single parent household)
- Whether the household is considered vulnerable due to a disability, due to being 16-17, due to being a former care leaver or due to old age.

7. What are the information gaps?

At the time of registration, applicants are requested to answer questions regarding:

- Their religion
- Their sexual orientation
- Their employment status and income level

However, these questions are not mandatory on the application form and many applicants choose not to complete them. As a result, the information that we hold is incomplete.

This information is not collected for Statutorily Homeless households.

There is currently no information collected about gender reassignment.

8. How are you going to address the gaps?

It would be possible to amend the application form/IT system to make the questions relating to protected characteristics mandatory. However this information is not required in order to assess an applicant's housing needs or to make an allocation of social housing. Therefore it is felt that applicants should have the option not to respond to these questions.

A further field will be added to the application form allowing applicants to identify if they have undergone gender reassignment but it is not proposed that this will be a mandatory question.

Summary of Data

9. Please provide a summary of what the data is telling you and what key issues the data is telling you.

Data from Coventry Homefinder regarding registered applicants for social housing (as at 1st April 2013):

Ethnic Origin:

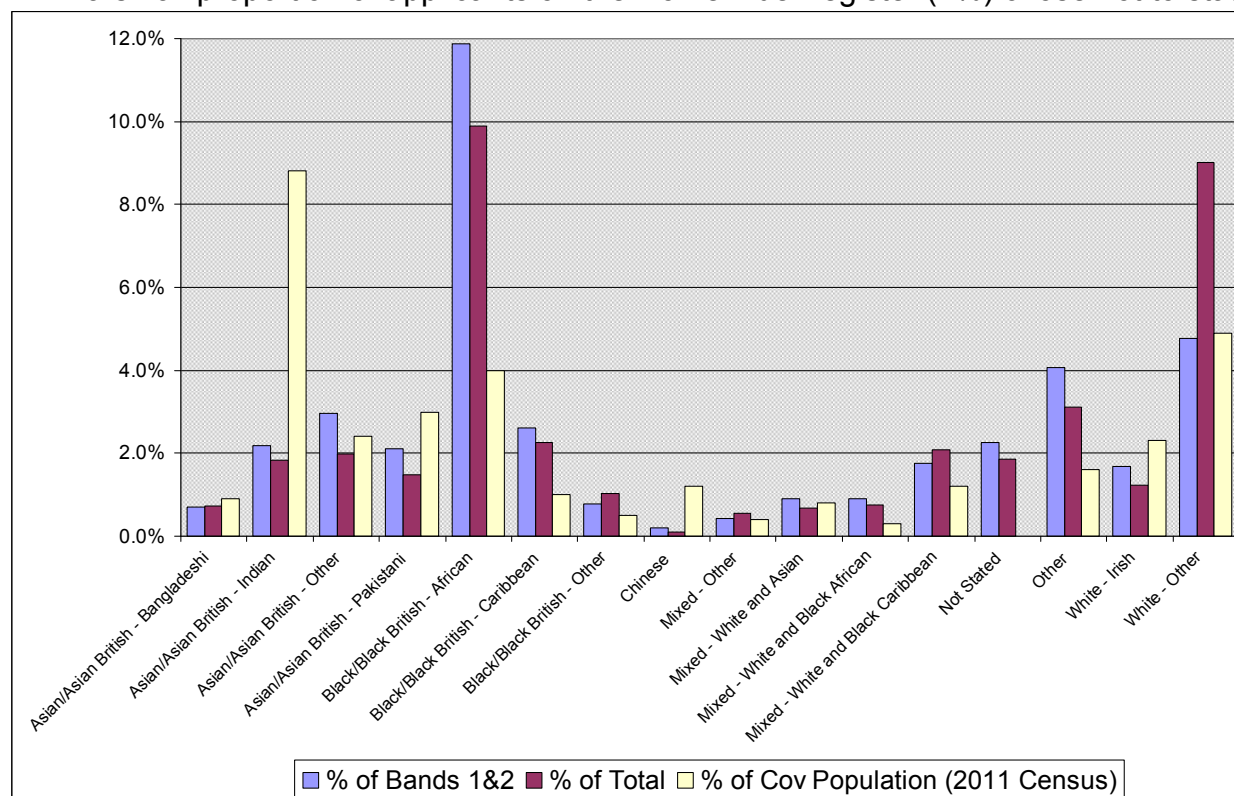
Most of the applicants on the Homefinder register (60%) identify themselves as White British. This is below the percentage of the population of Coventry who identified themselves as White British in the 2011 Census (67%).

There is considerable variation in other ethnic groups on the Homefinder register. 12% of households in priority bands, and 10% of the overall register, identify themselves as 'Black/Black British – African'. This is compared to 4% of the total city population in the 2011

Census. Other groups where the representation on Homefinder is higher than the city's population include: the other Black/Black British groups; the Mixed groups; and 'White – Other'.

Conversely, only 2% of applicants on the Homefinder register identify themselves as 'Asian/Asian British – Indian', compared to 9% of the total city population in the 2011 Census. This trend has been consistently identified in previous analysis. Other groups where the representation on Homefinder is lower than the city's population include: the other Asian/Asian British groups, White- Irish; and Chinese.

NB – a small proportion of applicants on the Homefinder register (2%) chose not to state their ethnic origin.



Age - The majority of Homefinder applicants are aged between 18 and 45 years (77% of the total register). Those aged over 65 make up a small proportion of the overall register (3.3% of the total) but a larger proportion of those over 65 have a housing need which has resulted in them being placed in a priority band. 21% of those registered who are over 65 are in a priority need band, compared to 11.8% of the overall register in a priority need band.

Disability - Disability is recorded on the Homefinder register when an applicant requires a property with specialist adaptations. The number of applicants with a disability that requires specially adapted housing is low (less than 1% of the register). However, of those that are registered and that require adapted housing, 70% are in a priority band due to their housing needs.

Data from P1E regarding statutorily homeless households in Coventry (2012/13):

Main points:

Race - Where race was stated, 63% of statutorily homeless people were White, 16% Black, 8% Asian and 4% mixed ethnicity. The demographics of Coventry (Census 2011) show 5.6% of the city's population identify themselves as Black/Black British and 16.3% identify themselves as Asian/Asian British. This shows a complex situation where some ethnic groups are over-represented and some are under-represented in homelessness statistics compared to the general population of the city. This is a long term trend that has been identified.

Age – 29% of statutorily homeless people were aged between 16 and 24. The largest age group affected are people aged between 25 and 44, these account for 61%.

Gender - Many of the statutorily homeless households were family units, but gender is only recorded for single applicants and lone parents. There were 303 single people with dependent children – 17 of these were male applicants, 286 were female. There were 108 single people with no dependents, of which 62 were female and 46 male. 121 Households were couples with dependent children.

Disability – 8% of statutorily homeless households were in priority need due to a disability – 19 due to a physical disability and 24 due to a mental illness or disability.

Generating and evaluating options

10. What are the different options being proposed to stakeholders?

The process of developing the draft Homefinder Policy involved several stages of consultation. Some changes are necessary due to changes in legislation; some are possible due to the provisions in the Localism Act 2011. The proposed changes are detailed in the table at section 11.

11. How will the options impact protected groups or vulnerable groups e.g. those experiencing deprivation?

There are several major changes proposed as part of the Homefinder Policy re-write. These have different impacts on protected/vulnerable groups.

Applicants who have a housing need which is recognised in the legislation and in the Homefinder Policy will be positively affected by proposed changes to the Policy – this group may include applicants in any of the protected characteristic groups, but as the data in section 9 shows, certain groups are more likely to be registered with Coventry Homefinder and/or are more likely to have a housing need.

As a result of these options, the Council will be able to offer a service which is better able to meet the housing needs of applicants on the register and there will more properties available to those customers in housing need.

The tables below detail the proposed changes to the Coventry Homefinder Policy and the potential impacts:

Issue	Current Policy	Proposed Change to Policy	Impacts of implementing this change
Priority bands	See separate table below	See separate table below. CHANGES have been made to some priority bands following consultation with stakeholders, to ensure that the policy meets the legislative requirements, and also to provide greater clarity on some circumstances that result in priority bands being awarded.	Certain categories of housing need specified in legislation (Part VI of the Housing Act 1996) must be given ‘reasonable preference’ for social housing allocations. It is then for the Authority to determine relative priority between these categories.

Issue	Current Policy	Proposed Change to Policy	Impacts of implementing this change
<p>Shortlisting priority</p>	<p>75% of properties have their shortlists ordered based on the priority band of the bidders who expressed an interest, 25% have their shortlists ordered based on registration date alone.</p>	<p>CHANGE - All properties advertised would have their shortlists ordered based on the priority band (and therefore the relative housing need) of the applicants that have bid. This would mean that applicants would not be prioritised for housing based on registration date (the amount of time they have been on the register) alone.</p>	<p>This was recommended by the Task & Finish Group and will ensure that applicants with a housing need are prioritised for housing above those that are already adequately housed.</p> <p>Statutory guidance from DCLG states very clearly ‘we expect social homes to go to people that genuinely need them’</p> <p>This group may include applicants in any of the protected characteristic groups, but as the data in section 9 shows, certain groups are more likely to be registered with Coventry Homefinder and/or are more likely to have a housing need.</p> <p>Applicants:</p> <p>On 31st December 2013, there were a total of 14,287 applicants/households registered on Coventry Homefinder. Of these, 1857 (13%) were in priority bands 1A to 2C, and 12,430 (87%) were in Bands 3A and 3B.</p> <p>29% of applicants in Band 3A and 3B have never placed a bid. Only 48% have placed a bid in the last 6 months.</p> <p>Properties during 2013:</p> <p>Overall, 2100 properties were let during calendar year 2013 (‘offer accepted’ during 2013). 574 were shortlisted based on date alone (27%).</p> <p>The nature of the stock (almost half of properties that become available are studio or 1bed properties) means that more people from Band 3 are housed than the 25% that would be expected from the 75/25 split – not all properties shortlisted by band go to an app in a priority band. (apps in priority bands are more likely to be families, lots of singles/couples in</p>

Issue	Current Policy	Proposed Change to Policy	Impacts of implementing this change
			<p>Band3)</p> <p>During 2013, 45% of applicants that accepted a property were from Bands 3A & 3B.</p> <p>Of those that were successful from Bands 3A & 3B, 17% were already tenants of a housing association, 28% were living with family or friends, and 34% were in private rented accommodation.</p> <p>Tenants that are under-occupying and affected by the 'bedroom tax' are prioritised in the Homefinder system. A move to 100% by priority would increase the number of properties available to people who have priority due to under occupation.</p> <p>528 households were assessed as Statutorily homeless during the calendar year 2013. 358 were housed as stat homeless through Homefinder.</p> <p>There would be a negative impact on applicants who have no assessed housing need under the Policy – they would have less chance of being allocated a property as the priority for all properties would be given to those with significant housing needs. However, this needs to be balanced against the alternative negative impact on applicants with housing needs who may not receive an allocation of a property under the current policy where the property goes to someone who has been registered for longer, but is already adequately housed.</p>

Issue	Current Policy	Proposed Change to Policy	Impacts of implementing this change
<p>Registration date/ effective date.</p>	<p>The original date of registration is used to prioritise shortlists where more than one person in the same band has placed a bid.</p>	<p>CHANGE - Shortlisted bids in the same band will be prioritised based on the 'effective date' which will be the date that the band was awarded, rather than just the date that the applicant first registered. This will reflect how long the household has been in housing need rather than just how long they have been on the register. Applicants that have been in housing need for a longer period will be prioritised.</p>	<p>This will have a positive impact on applicants in housing need, ensuring a fair and transparent way to prioritise between applicants in the same band.</p> <p>This group may include applicants in any of the protected characteristic groups, but as the data in section 9 shows, certain groups are more likely to be registered with Coventry Homefinder and/or are more likely to have a housing need.</p> <p>On 31st December 2013, 1857 applicants were in priority bands 1A to 2C.</p>
<p>Offers of accomm. for Statutorily Homeless households</p>	<p>Statutorily homeless households are placed in Band 1A for one bidding period to place their own bids. If they are unsuccessful, the Housing Assessment Officer places bids in future bidding rounds until a successful match means that the main housing duty can be discharged.</p>	<p>CHANGE – Statutorily homeless households would be placed in Band 1A as an extreme urgent case, but bids would be placed by the Housing Assessment Officer from the outset to maximise the chance of a successful match. Housing Assessment Officers also have the option of discharging the main housing duty with an offer of a suitable private rented property/ tenancy.</p>	<p>This would have a positive impact in ensuring that statutorily homeless households receive an offer of suitable accommodation as soon as possible. However, there may be a perceived negative impact that stat homeless applicants no longer get one week of 'choice' where they are able to place their own bids.</p> <p>This group may include applicants in any of the protected characteristic groups, but as the data in section 9 shows, certain groups are represented to a greater extent in the number of applicants assessed as statutorily homeless (and owed the main housing duty by the Council).</p> <p>During 2012/13, 540 households were assessed as statutorily homeless and owed the main housing duty by the Council. 440 households were housed through Coventry Homefinder as their offer of accommodation to discharge the main housing duty (the others will have rejected their offer and gone on to secure housing for themselves)</p>

Issue	Current Policy	Proposed Change to Policy	Impacts of implementing this change
Advertising adapted properties	<p>Adapted properties are categorised based on the level of adaptation and a brief description of adaptations provided. Applicants who are eligible place bids and shortlists are created in the same way as for all other properties.</p>	<p>CHANGE – adapted properties will be offered directly to people on the register who require the specific adaptations in the property. This may mean that properties are not offered to the applicant with the highest band/earliest date, but will ensure that the best fit is found between the adaptations provided and the needs of the household.</p>	<p>This will directly affect households/applicants that have a disability or illness that means that they require properties with specific adaptations. The adaptations required are specific to the household, yet the range of adaptations in a property can be from full wheelchair accessibility to a basic stair lift.</p> <p>There will be a positive impact on these households. Currently there is only a small amount of information in the property advert about the adaptations that are provided and it is difficult for applicants to determine whether the adaptations would meet their requirements. This leads to applicants placing bids on properties that are not suitable and then having to refuse the property, and also instances where Registered Providers have been unable to let the property and have had to remove adaptations.</p> <p>Given the shortage of adapted properties and the high proportion of applicants who need an adapted property that are also in housing need/priority band, this proposal will make better use of the adapted properties that become available by ensuring that they are matched to applicants that require those types of adaptations. Applicants will benefit as they will receive more information about the adaptations in the property and be more informed as to whether the property will be suitable.</p> <p>Advice will be taken from medical professionals and an assessment will be carried out by an Occupational Therapist, where appropriate. It will be important to ensure that the records of adaptations required are kept up to date to ensure that appropriate offers are being made.</p> <p>Applicants will still be able to place bids on non-adapted</p>

Page	Current Policy	Proposed Change to Policy	Impacts of implementing this change
68			<p>properties through the Homefinder system in the same way as other applicants. If they are successful in placing a bid for a property, the landlord must then consider whether it is possible and reasonable for the property to be adapted to meet their needs.</p> <p>On 31st December 2013, there were 126 households registered on Homefinder that required a property with specific adaptations. Of these, 89 (71%) were in a priority band (Bands 1A to 2C).</p> <p>These households are also more likely to be older – 24% of the applicants that require an adapted property are over 55, compared to 9% of the overall register over 55.</p>
Priority band due to health/medical needs	<p>Medical priority is assessed by the Coventry Homefinder Team based on a medical assessment form and additional information from medical professionals (where appropriate)</p>	<p>CHANGE – requests for priority banding based on health/medical grounds will usually require an assessment from an Occupational Therapist (except when this is not appropriate) in addition to the medical assessment form and evidence from doctors etc.</p>	<p>This will have a positive impact on people with disabilities and older people.</p> <p>Medical priority is given when the current property is unsuitable and is having a negative impact on the medical condition of the applicant. An Occupational Therapist will be able to carry out an expert assessment of what impact the property is having on the applicant and what the requirements of the applicant's household are. The Homefinder Team will then be more informed as to whether medical priority on Homefinder is appropriate.</p> <p>The OT will also be able to carry out an assessment as to whether the applicant's situation can be alleviated with the provision of adaptations or equipment in their existing property. This will be positive as it could ensure that the applicant's needs are met in their current home and remove the requirement to move, or if this is not possible, could</p>

Issue	Current Policy	Proposed Change to Policy	Impacts of implementing this change
			<p>improve their situation whilst awaiting a move.</p> <p>On 31st December 2013, there were 16 applicants who had been placed in Band 1A due to exceptional medical needs, 3 had been placed in Band 1B due to medical needs and overcrowding, 186 had been placed in Band 2A due to urgent medical needs, and 57 had been placed in Band 2B due to low level medical needs (262 in total).</p>
Armed forces personnel	There are no additional priorities for former members of the armed forces over other applicants.	CHANGE - The Policy complies with new legislation by providing additional preference for former members of the armed forces that also have a reasonable preference housing need.	<p>This change is required by legislation. It is unclear how many applicants this will affect and whether there will be any equality impacts arising from it. This will be monitored.</p> <p>There will be a positive impact on members/former members of the Armed Forces that have housing needs arising from a disability or injury.</p>
Refusal of offers	Applicants that refuse 10 or more offers without good reason are requested to attend interview and their application may be closed	CHANGE - Applicants that refuse 5 offers may have their application suspended whilst the reasons for refusal are explored and the application may be closed if the refusals are found not to be reasonable.	<p>This group may include applicants in any of the protected characteristic groups, but as the data in section 9 shows, certain groups are more likely to be registered with Coventry Homefinder and/or are more likely to have a housing need.</p> <p>In the 12 months to 31st December 2013, 1537 applicants rejected offers of an allocation of a property. Of these, 36 rejected five or more offers within the year.</p> <p>Officers will need to be aware of particular issues or requirements arising from protected characteristics (such as a disability or medical condition) which may mean that a property is not suitable and therefore it is reasonable for the applicant to refuse. Detailed procedures and robust monitoring will ensure that applicants are not unfairly penalised for refusing properties.</p>

Issue	Current Policy	Proposed Change to Policy	Impacts of implementing this change
Eligibility and qualification	<p>Certain applicants are not eligible to join the register based on immigration status, habitual residence, and behaviour which makes them 'unsuitable to be a tenant'.</p>	<p>TECHNICAL CHANGE – eligibility criteria based on immigration status and/or habitual residence remains the same. The Localism Act 2011 introduced the ability for councils to decide who 'qualifies' to join the register. The draft policy considers those 'unsuitable to be a tenant' as not qualifying to join the register. Home owners do not qualify unless there are specific housing needs/ circumstances.</p> <p>The Task & Finish Group recommended keeping an 'open' register therefore no additional qualifying criteria have been included.</p>	<p>The eligibility criteria are set in legislation and are based mainly on immigration status and habitual residence in the UK. The Council has no discretion to change this.</p> <p>Keeping an 'open' register will mean that anyone who is eligible will be able to register for social housing in Coventry. This has a positive equality impact as no groups are excluded from registering.</p>
Requesting priority	<p>Applicants are automatically registered in Band 3A or 3B, and must contact the Homefinder Team to request priority banding if they have a housing need.</p>	<p>NO CHANGE – applicants are still required to directly contact the Homefinder Team to request priority banding, however the process and evidence required have been clarified in the Policy.</p>	<p>The Council has a duty to people in its area to ensure that assistance is given free of charge to those who are likely to have difficulty in making an application for housing without such assistance.</p> <p>Coventry Homefinder aims to ensure equal access to all and has developed a number of ways by which those who are unable to use the system themselves and don't have support otherwise available to them, are not disadvantaged.</p> <p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sending details of vacant properties to people who are unable to access the property adverts through the online Homefinder system. • Contacting applicants when there is a property being advertised that matches their specific requirements. • Placing bids for vulnerable households based on pre-agreed criteria of location and property type.

Issue	Current Policy	Proposed Change to Policy	Impacts of implementing this change
			<p>To access this support applicants or their advocates, with written approval to represent them, can contact the Homefinder Team.</p> <p>The automatic registering system means that applicants can immediately access and start to use the system.</p>

Specific changes to band priorities:	
Band change	Impacts of implementing this change
<p>Applicants that need to move as part of the National Witness Mobility Scheme will be placed in Band 1A (this is an increase from Band 2B).</p>	<p>This would have a positive impact on applicants that need to move urgently due to being placed on the National Witness Mobility Scheme. The number of applicants affected by this is small and it is not clear if there are any direct equalities impacts – this would be monitored.</p>
<p>Tenants of social landlords who are under-occupying their home by three or more bedrooms will be placed in Band 1A (this is an additional category – the policy currently places those under-occupying by two bedrooms in Band 1B and those under-occupying by one bedroom in Band 2A)</p>	<p>This would have a positive impact on applicants that require a move from a large family property (4 or more bedrooms).</p> <p>It would assist those affected by the ‘bedroom tax’ welfare reforms to move to a more suitably sized property.</p> <p>This would also have a positive impact on households on the register that require large family housing which is in very short supply, as the household moving out will free up a property for a household that may be overcrowded.</p> <p>It is unclear how many applicants that this would affect but the number is likely to be small – there are 52 applicants on the Homefinder register that are in Band 1B due to under-occupation by two or more bedrooms (as at 31st December 2013).</p>
<p>People fleeing violence, harassment and abuse would be placed in Band 1B. This is an increase in priority from Band 2B.</p>	<p>This would have a positive impact by increasing the priority for people who are fleeing violence, harassment and abuse.</p> <p>This would benefit applicants with protected characteristics who may be experiencing violence, abuse or harassment based on those protected characteristics (for example, homophobic</p>

Specific changes to band priorities:	
Band change	Impacts of implementing this change
	violence/abuse, racist violence/abuse and other hate crimes).
People living in extreme unsanitary conditions causing severe health and safety hazards will be placed in Band 1B. This is an increase in priority for extreme cases – the current policy places all unsanitary condition cases in Band 2A (regardless of severity).	<p>This would have a positive impact by increasing the priority for people who need to move from extreme unsanitary conditions. There are not likely to be any equality impacts arising from this change.</p> <p>The number of applicants affected is likely to be very small.</p>
People living in short term hostels would be placed in Band 1B. This is an increase in priority from Band 2B	<p>This would have a positive impact by increasing the priority for people who are living in short term hostel accommodation. It will improve the likelihood of the applicant securing accommodation within the 12-16 week period that they are living in the hostel.</p> <p>On 31st December 2013, there were 230 applicants with hostel priority.</p> <p>Whilst there are a small number of hostel spaces for single females, the majority of hostel dwellers are single males. This group is less likely to be in a priority need group under the homelessness legislation (Part VII Housing Act 1996) therefore it is necessary to provide priority banding under the allocations policy.</p>
Households who need to move to a certain locality to avoid hardship would be placed in Band 2B. This has been separated out from other categories for clarity.	This would have a positive impact by increasing the priority for people who need to move to avoid hardship. There is considerable overlap with other housing need priority categories (especially social/welfare and medical) but the hardship category also includes people who need to move to take up or maintain employment and long term training.
Households that need to move to prevent homelessness would be placed in Band 2B (certain circumstances – see draft Policy document)	<p>This would have a positive impact by increasing the priority for households at risk of homelessness.</p> <p>This group may include applicants in any of the protected characteristic groups, but as the data in section 9 shows, certain groups are more likely to be registered with Coventry Homefinder and/or are more likely to become homeless.</p>

Specific changes to band priorities:	
Band change	Impacts of implementing this change
<p>Single non-dependent/adult children would be given the overcrowding priority banding on their own application if they are currently living in the family home and that home is overcrowded, where the overcrowding would be relieved by them moving into their own separate accommodation.</p>	<p>This would have a positive impact by increasing the options available to households that are experiencing overcrowding.</p> <p>There is a severe shortage of large family housing (especially 4+ bedrooms) and families that are overcrowded can unfortunately have to wait for a very long time for a suitable property to become available. During 2012/13, only 38 properties with 4 or more bedrooms became available, whereas on 31st December 2013 there were 454 households on the register requiring a minimum of 4 bedrooms – of these 146 were in urgent housing need (Bands 1A to 2C).</p> <p>There are 522 households who are currently in Band 2A due to overcrowding who require one additional bedroom, and 21 households in Band 1A as they require two or more additional bedrooms. A proportion of these households will contain a non-dependent adult child who may be willing to move out to relieve the overcrowding. (31st December 2013)</p>
<p>Children who have been 'looked-after' by the local authority and who are ready to move to independent accommodation will be placed in Band 2A and the effective date will be backdated to their 16th birthday.</p>	<p>This would have a positive impact by increasing the possibility for looked after children with a suitable support package to secure independent accommodation by their 18th birthday.</p> <p>There are 24 applicants that currently have priority banding due to being a looked-after child (as at 31st December 2013).</p>

12. Please detail how you could mitigate any negative impacts

There will be a negative impact on applicants who have no assessed housing need under the Policy – they will have less chance of being allocated a property as the priority for all properties will be given to those with significant housing needs. However, this needs to be balanced against the alternative negative impact on applicants with housing needs who may not receive an allocation of a property under the current policy where the property goes to someone who has been registered for longer, but is already adequately housed.

The information in section 9 shows that applicants with a housing need are more likely to be in a group with a protected characteristic.

13. Identify which stakeholders would be positively/negatively affected by the options (consider contractors/service users/employees).

Coventry Homefinder is a partnership between Coventry City Council and Registered Providers (mostly Housing Associations) and would be affected by the options put forward. Whitefriars Housing Group expressed opposition to the proposal to prioritise all property shortlists by Band rather than keep 25% of shortlists prioritised by registration date (see key findings and final option sections for more detail and response).

Formal Consultation

14. Who took part in the consultation? Please also specify representatives of any protected groups for example service users, employees, partners etc.

A Task & Finish Group was set up by the Transport and Infrastructure Development Scrutiny Board (6) The group met four times between 1st November 2012 and 31st January 2013. They heard evidence from Council officers from Housing, three housing associations in the city and two advice and support agencies that support Coventry residents in their housing needs.

The Scrutiny Board then made recommendations to the Cabinet Member arising from the Task & Finish Group. Following this, the Cabinet Member for Housing instructed officers to undertake a full review and re-write of the Coventry Homefinder Choice Based Lettings Policy.

Consultation was then carried out in July 2013 with a range of representatives in a series of focus groups, including Registered Providers, advice agencies, other Council teams (housing benefit, social care, community safety etc), outside organisations including those that work with homeless and/or vulnerable people, the Coventry Homefinder Partnership Board and the Housing Options and Coventry Homefinder teams. Questionnaires were also sent out with the main discussion points/questions to a wide range of people who were not able to attend.

Taking the recommendations from the Task & Finish Group and the focus group discussions, a draft Coventry Homefinder Policy was produced which was then released for public consultation for 8 weeks, from 21st October 2013 to 15th December 2013.

The draft Policy and an accompanying online survey were placed on the Council website. This was also advertised to the public through the Council’s Facebook and Twitter announcements. A link was also placed on the Coventry Homefinder website (the vast majority of applicants access Homefinder using the website). Applicants that have registered, have been placed in a priority band (Bands 1A to 2C), and who have provided an email address on their application were also notified by email (1029 in total). Key contacts and stakeholders, including those that were invited to the focus groups, were also notified by email. Councillors were informed of the consultation with an email and a notice in the Members weekly bulletin. Other Council staff were informed on the staff intranet site and the Beacon daily round-up email.

Applicants that were registered, in a priority need band (Bands 1A to 2C) and had provided an email address on their application were emailed to inform them of the consultation and invite them to take part. The characteristics of these applicants were:

[Please note – these are the characteristics of the applicants in priority bands that had provided an email address, it is not the characteristics of all the applicants in the priority bands]

Age group of main applicant	Percentage
18 to 25	13%
26 to 35	32%
36 to 45	26%
46 to 55	16%
56 to 65	9%
66 to 75	3%
Over 75	1%
Total	100%

Gender of Main Applicant	Percentage
Female	60%
Male	40%
Total	100%

Ethnicity of Main Applicant	Percentage
Asian/Asian British	8%
Black/Black British	17%
Chinese	0%
Mixed	4%
Not stated	1%
Other	3%
White British	61%
White Irish & Other	6%
Total	100%

Disability	Percentage
No	94%
Yes	6%
Total	100%

Sexual Orientation	Percentage
Bisexual	1.9%
Gay	1.0%
heterosexual	65.2%
Lesbian	0.4%
Not stated	31.5%
Total	100.0%

Religion	Percentage
Buddhist	0.2%
Christian	41.9%
Hindu	0.7%
Islam	12.1%
Sikh	0.4%
Not stated/Other	44.7%
Total	100.0%

In terms of **those that responded** to the public consultation by completing the online survey, many chose not to complete the equality data questions. Of the 84 responses received, 61 identified that they were responding as an individual (as well as 2 on behalf of a group/organisation, 1 as an elected member, 3 representing a Registered Provider and 17 that skipped the question).

How old are you?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Under 16	0%	0
16 - 24	7%	4
25 - 34	18%	11
35 - 44	30%	18
45 - 54	23%	14
55 - 64	20%	12
65 - 74	2%	1
75 - 84	0%	0
85+	0%	0
answered question		60
skipped question		24

What is your gender?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Male	25%	15
Female	75%	44
answered question		59
skipped question		25

Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	18%	11
No	82%	50

What is your ethnic background?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
White - British (includes English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish)	88%	52
White - Irish	2%	1
White - Gypsy/Irish Traveller	0%	0
White - Other	0%	0
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	0%	0
Mixed - White and Black African	0%	0
Mixed - White and Asian	0%	0
Mixed - Other	2%	1
Asian/ Asian British - Indian	0%	0
Asian/ Asian British - Pakistani	3%	2
Asian/ Asian British - Bangladeshi	0%	0
Chinese	0%	0
Asian/ Asian British - Other	2%	1
Black/ Black British - African	2%	1

Black/ Black British - Caribbean	2%	1
Black/Black British - Other	0%	0
Arab	0%	0
Any other ethnic group	0%	0
answered question		59
skipped question		25

15. Are there any protected groups that you have not consulted with? If so, why not?(Some groups might not be relevant)

Invitations to participate in consultation were made with a wide range of customers including those from protected groups.

Invitations to take part in the consultation were also sent to all the contacts on the Corporate Research equalities groups and network contacts list, covering all the main protected groups.

16. What are the key findings of the consultation?

The key findings of the final 8-week public consultation were:

Consultation Question	Agree	Disagree	Additional Comments	Outcome
1. Do you agree that the shortlists for all properties should be prioritised by Band (based on housing needs)?	63%	33%	The majority of respondents agreed with this policy change, however there were concerns about balanced communities and people with no housing need still having 'a chance' to get a property.	Whitefriars Housing Group in particular was opposed to this policy change. However, there was clear direction from the Task & Finish Group and Cabinet Member that this policy change should be brought in. Following further discussion, an alternative proposal has been included in the draft Policy – that all properties have their shortlists prioritised by Band, but that Registered Providers can specify that priority will be given to their own current tenants for up to 10% of the properties that are advertised.
2. Applicants that need to move as part of the national witness mobility scheme would be placed in band 1A. This is an increase from band 2A	62%	18%		This proposed change has been included in the draft Coventry Homefinder Policy put forward for recommendation to Cabinet.
3. Tenants of social landlords who are under-occupying their home by 3 or more bedrooms would be placed in band 1A	77%	17%		This proposed change has been included in the draft Coventry Homefinder Policy put forward for recommendation to Cabinet.
4. People fleeing violence harassment and abuse would be placed in 1B, this is an increase in priority from band 2B	83%	7%		This proposed change has been included in the draft Coventry Homefinder Policy put forward for recommendation to Cabinet.
5. People living in extreme unsanitary conditions causing severe health and safety hazards would be placed in band	76%	12%		This proposed change has been included in the draft Coventry Homefinder Policy put forward for recommendation to Cabinet.

Consultation Question	Agree	Disagree	Additional Comments	Outcome
6. People living in short term hostels would be placed in band 1B, this is an increase from band 2B	46%	33%	There were concerns that this level of priority was too high – particularly as this group generally requires bedsit or one-bedroomed accommodation for single people, and would receive a higher band than applicants that may be affected by the ‘bedroom tax’ welfare reforms and needing to down-size.	Following the consultation this proposal was changed. The draft Policy which will be put forward for recommendation to Cabinet will place the hostel priority in Band 2A.
7. Household who need to move to a certain locality to avoid hardship will be placed in band 2B.	37%	24%	There were a large proportion of respondents who replied ‘neither agree nor disagree’ and some comments received suggested that this category was not well understood.	<p>This proposed change has been included in the draft Coventry Homefinder Policy put forward for recommendation to Cabinet.</p> <p>This is one of the priority need categories in the legislation, but there is considerable overlap with the social/welfare need category. The category has been specified separately to ensure that applicants falling into this group are assessed properly.</p>
8. Households who need to move to prevent homelessness will be placed in band 2B	57%	16%		This proposed change has been included in the draft Coventry Homefinder Policy put forward for recommendation to Cabinet.
9. Unintentionally homeless people who are not in a priority need group will be placed in band 2B, this is an increase from band 2C	66%	13%	There are five ‘tests’ that are applied when carrying out a homelessness assessment – the ‘test’ for priority need group comes before the ‘test’ for intentionality therefore we cannot determine whether a homeless applicant without a priority need is intentionally homeless or not.	<p>This proposed change has not been included in the draft Coventry Homefinder Policy put forward for recommendation to Cabinet.</p> <p>Applicants who have had a homelessness assessment/decision and have been found not to be statutorily homeless (not owed the main housing duty) will be placed in Band 2C.</p>

Consultation Question	Agree	Disagree	Additional Comments	Outcome
10. Do you agree that the effective date should be used to prioritise applications in the same band	69%	27%		This proposed change has been included in the draft Coventry Homefinder Policy put forward for recommendation to Cabinet.
11. Do you agree with the proposed change to the way that statutorily homeless households are given access to Homefinder?	65%	22%		This proposed change has been included in the draft Coventry Homefinder Policy put forward for recommendation to Cabinet.
12. Do you agree with the proposed change to the way that adapted properties are let through Homefinder?	78%	8%		This proposed change has been included in the draft Coventry Homefinder Policy put forward for recommendation to Cabinet.
13. Do you agree that applicants who request medical priority should have an OT assessment?	76%	11%		This proposed change has been included in the draft Coventry Homefinder Policy put forward for recommendation to Cabinet.
14. Do you agree that this is an appropriate way to give additional priority to former members of the armed forces that also have a housing need?	71%	13%		This proposed change has been included in the draft Coventry Homefinder Policy put forward for recommendation to Cabinet.
15. Do you agree that children looked after by the authority should be awarded priority earlier so that they can be accommodated by their 18th birthday	66%	20%		This proposed change has been included in the draft Coventry Homefinder Policy put forward for recommendation to Cabinet.
16. Do you agree with the proposed change from 3 bids per week to 2 bids per week	53%	34%	There was some concern that it would be more difficult to secure a property with only 2 bids per week. Properties may also be more difficult to let on the first advert if there are fewer applicants on the shortlist.	This proposed change has not been included in the draft Coventry Homefinder Policy put forward for recommendation to Cabinet. The current policy of each applicant being able to bid (express an interest) on up to 3 properties per week has been retained.

Consultation Question	Agree	Disagree	Additional Comments	Outcome
17. Do you agree that applicants who refuse 5 offers should have their applications closed?	62%	25%	Comments included ensuring that the Policy is clear on what is/is not a 'reasonable' reason for refusing a property.	This proposed change has been included in the draft Coventry Homefinder Policy put forward for recommendation to Cabinet.
18. What are your views on the local connection criteria and proposed changes to government guidance?	<p>This was a free text box and 55 comments were received. 80% of respondents agreed that there should be some form of local connection test, 42% specifically stated that they agreed with the stricter Govt definition.</p> <p>The Coventry Homefinder online registration system allows automatic registration – once an applicant has completed the online registration form, they are immediately placed in Band 3A/3B, given a registration number and able to place bids on properties (provided they meet eligibility criteria). If an applicant then believes they should be placed in a higher band due to their housing needs, they contact the Homefinder Team directly. Introducing qualifying criteria based on local connection would require every application to be checked and verified before the applicant could be registered and start bidding. This would require additional resources (including staff) and would introduce a delay to the applicant before they were able to use the system.</p>		<p>There was clear direction from the Scrutiny Board and Cabinet Member that Homefinder should retain an 'open' register and not restrict people being able to make an application (apart from the statutory eligibility criteria).</p> <p>The Coventry Homefinder Policy gives lesser priority to applicants that do not have a local connection. The local connection definition in the Policy is the same as the definition used to assess local connection in a homelessness application assessment.</p> <p>No change has been proposed for the draft Coventry Homefinder Policy put forward for recommendation to Cabinet.</p>	

17. Following the consultation, what additional equality issues have emerged (if any)?

These additional equality issues emerged:

- There must be sensitive and robust guidelines regarding the assessment of whether it is 'reasonable' for an applicant to refuse a property. There may be reasons related to a protected characteristic which mean that refusal of a particular property is reasonable. Each case will be considered on an individual basis.
- Suitable information must be available and monitoring must be put in place to ensure that applicants with a housing need are aware of the need to request priority banding by contacting the Coventry Homefinder Team, and are able to do so by ensuring that contact methods are accessible and that support is provided to those that require it.

18. Have any of the options, service models etc changed following consultation? If so, please provide details of the changes made:

Changes have been detailed in the table in section 16.

The biggest change that was proposed in the original options was for all properties to have their shortlists prioritised by band (giving priority to those in housing need) rather than the present situation that 25% of properties have their shortlists prioritised by registration date alone (regardless of housing need). This was a recommendation from the Task & Finish Group. Given the high demand for social housing, the high number of applicants on the register and the direction given in the statutory guidance, it was felt that allocating approx. 500-550 properties each year with no consideration of housing need, to households who were already adequately housed, was no longer justifiable.

However, during the consultation, concern was expressed by Whitefriars Housing Group that this would negatively affect their tenants that had an aspiration to move, and have been on the waiting list for years, but do not have an assessed housing need under the legislation. They would find it more difficult to move through the Homefinder system.

Following further discussions, it is now proposed that all properties advertised through Homefinder have their shortlists ordered by Band but that for up to 10% of properties advertised, the Partner Registered Provider can state that priority will be given to applicants that are current tenants of theirs.

This would ensure that the majority of properties are prioritised for those with housing need, but would also ensure that current tenants would have the chance to move between properties in their landlord's stock.

19. Please confirm below which option has been chosen for implementation.

The [draft] Coventry Homefinder Choice Based Lettings Policy 2014 has been produced and will be considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 15th April 2014. This draft contains all changes that have been made to the policy. The table at section 16 details the consultation outcomes and the options chosen to be put forward to Cabinet.

20. Following consultation, please indicate which of the following best describes the equality impact of this analysis.

- There will be no equality impact if the proposed option is implemented.
- There will be positive equality impact if the proposed option is implemented.
- There will be negative equality impact if the preferred option is implemented, but this can be objectively justified. Please state clearly what this justification is and what steps will be taken to ameliorate the negative impact.

21. How will the changes be monitored for equalities over the next 6 – 12 months?

Analysis of the Homefinder register and properties that have been advertised is carried out by the Housing Strategy Team each quarter. An annual report is also produced. This analysis includes monitoring equalities issues.

22. What is any will be the impact on the workforce following implementation of the final option? Please make reference to the relevant equality groups (as protected under the Equality Act).

There will be no impact on the workforce.

Social Value

23. Please state how the social value outcomes have been considered in making this decision.

The changes proposed to the Coventry Homefinder Policy will not involve the procurement of new goods or services. Changes will be required to the existing IT system which is provided by Abritas Ltd.

Formal decision-making process

Please detail below the committees, boards or panels that have considered this analysis.

Name	Date	Chair	Decision taken
The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)	19-03-14	Councillor Tony Skipper	
Cabinet	15-04-14	Councillor Ann Lucas	

Approval

Approval required from Director and Cabinet Member

Director Name	Signature	Date
Brian Walsh		14-03-2014
Cabinet Member Name	Portfolio	Approval Date
Ed Ruane	Housing & Heritage	14-03-2014

***Note:** Failure to comply with duties on equalities and consultation will put the Council (and specifically the elected member or officer making the decision) at risk of judicial review.

Monitoring and Review

This section should be completed 6-12 months after implementation

- a) Please summarise below the most up to date monitoring information for the newly implemented service, by reference to relevant protected groups.

Analysis of the Homefinder register at 31st July 2015 (12 months after full implementation of the new Homefinder Policy) shows:

Ethnic Origin:

Most of the applicants on the Homefinder register (58%) identify their ethnicity as White-British. This is below the percentage of the population of Coventry who identified themselves as White-British in the 2011 Census (67%) and is slightly lower than the baseline for this ECA (see section 9 above) of 60% as at 1st April 2013.

There has been little change in the proportions of other ethnic groups on the register, with the exceptions of the White-Other group, (which has increased from 10% to 12% of the overall register) and the Black-African group (overall proportion on the register still 10%, but as a proportion of the priority band/housing need, has increased from 12% to 14.5%).

Age:

The age profile of the Homefinder register is very similar to the baseline (Section 9) – the majority of applicants are aged between 18 and 45 (76%). Those aged over 65 are a small proportion of the register (3.7% of the total), but as previously identified, a higher proportion of these are in a priority need band (20% aged over 65 in housing need, compared to 11.8% overall)

Disability:

Disability is recorded on the Homefinder system only where the disability means that the applicant requires specially adapted accommodation. The number of applicants requiring specially adapted accommodation is still low (0.9% of the register) but of these, 75% are in a priority band due to their housing needs.

Gender:

Information on gender was not available previously, but analysis of the register on 31st July 2015 shows that the main applicant was female for 60% of households on the Homefinder register, and the main applicant was male for 40% of households.

Analysis of households that have been housed in the 12 months since the new policy was implemented on 31st July 2014:

Ethnicity:

The ethnicity profile of households that were housed during the 12 months since implementation is very similar to that of the profile of the register overall. 59% of households housed were White-British, 13% were Black-African, 10% were White-Other.

Age:

70% of households that were housed had a main applicant in the age range 18-45 years. 6% of those housed were over 65, which is higher than the proportion of the register who are over 65 (3.7%), but this reflects the fact that this group are more likely to be in housing need.

Gender:

58% of households that were housed had a main applicant who was female, 42% had a main applicant who was male.

Disability:

2.5% of people housed in the 12 months after implementation had been assessed as requiring specially adapted accommodation. This is higher than the proportion on the register (less than 1%) but reflects the fact that this group are more likely to be in a priority need band.

What has been the actual equality impact on service users following implementation?

Priority for all properties is now based on Band and Effective Date. The intention of this policy change was to ensure that applicants with the greatest housing need (in the highest band) who have been in housing need the longest (the earliest 'effective date') are prioritised for properties above other applicants.

71% of properties advertised in the 12 months after implementation were let to applicants in priority bands 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B and 2C (with an assessed housing need). In the 12 months before the implementation of this policy, only 58% of properties were let to applicants in the priority bands.

Applicants in the priority bands may be in any of the protected characteristic groups, but as the data in Section 9 and above shows, certain groups are more likely to be registered with Coventry Homefinder and/or are more likely to have a housing need.

The increase in the proportion of properties that are let to applicants in housing need is therefore a positive impact.

This does mean that applicants without a housing need (in Bands 3A and 3B) are less likely to successfully bid for a property. However, with the shortage of social housing in the city, the Policy intends to support those who are currently homeless or in unsuitable housing over those who are suitably housed but want to move. The Government's statutory guidance states: "we expect social homes to go to people who genuinely need them".

There have been operational issues regarding the use of Occupational Therapist assessments to better inform decisions on medical need priority. OT assessments have not been carried out in a timely manner for all applicants. This has not delayed or denied decisions on medical priority, but has meant that assessments are made based on the applicant's self-reported needs and where appropriate, evidence from GPs and other support workers. This has had a neutral impact in terms of the policy (this was the process prior to the policy implementation) and the services are working together to improve the assessments and ensure that the most appropriate course is taken (either re-housing or aids/adaptations being provided in the current home).

c) What have been the actual equality impacts on the workforce since implementation?

None.

Please send a copy of the completed form to your Directorate Corporate Equality Officer and a copy to the Corporate Equalities Team, Room 66, Council House, Earl Street, Coventry CV1 5RR.

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Agenda Item 8

Last updated 24/09/15

Communities & Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) Work Programme 2015/16

8 July 2015
City of Culture
16 September 2015
Homelessness Service
4 November 2015
Coventry Homefinder Choice Based Lettings Policy
Community Activity Directory
Active Citizens, Strong Communities Strategy: Coventry's Asset Based Working Strategy Implementation Plan
13 January 2016
To be identified
9 March 2016
Implications of Housing Policy changes in London and subsequent influence on housing stock in Coventry be identified
20 April 2016
To be identified
Dates to be Determined
Delivering Early Action Neighbourhood Bid
Community Grants
Fly-tipping
Residents Parking Schemes
Waste collection policy – combined with a visit to the recycling plant
Pothole Strategy
School Crossing Patrols

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer	Source	Outcomes
8 July 2015	City of Culture	A briefing note with the current position and future plans for the bid for UK City of Culture 20121	David Nuttal Cllr Abbott	Informal meeting 17/6/15	
16 September 2015	Homelessness Service	Report back on the performance of the new service implemented in April 2014 run by the Salvation Army	Cllr Abbott / Ayaz Maqsood	Cabinet Member	
4 November 2015	Coventry Homefinder Choice Based Lettings Policy	Report back on the impacts of the policy, following on from the first full year implementation.	Cllr Abbott/ Adrienne Bellingeri Anthea Smith Kimberly Fawcett	SB3 19th March 2014	
	Active Citizens, Strong Communities Strategy: Coventry's Asset Based Working Strategy Implementation Plan	To consider progress on the Asset Based working strategy	Valerie De-Souza Michelle McGinty Helen Shankster Cllr Abbott		
	Community Activity Directory	The Board were requested by SB5 to consider how the Community Development Team works in the neighbourhoods, with particular reference to the hard to reach and disadvantaged communities and individuals, and how support is offered to the most vulnerable.	Pete Fahy Michelle McGinty Cllr Abbott	SB5 1/7/15	
13 January 2016					
9 March 2016					
20 April 2016					

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer	Source	Outcomes
Dates to be determined					
	Delivering Early Action Neighbourhood Bid		Helen Shankster Cllr Abbott		
	Community Grants	Looking at the impact of the Community Grants programme	Pete Fahy Cllr Abbott Cllr Townshend		
	Fly-tipping	Members would like to know what is being done to address the increase in fly-tipping and concern from residents.		Chairs meeting 20/5/15	
	Residents Parking Schemes	To look in more detail at the current and proposed resident parking schemes including virtual permits.	Andrew Walster Cllr Lancaster	Informal meeting 17/6/15	
	Waste collection policy – combined with a visit to the recycling plant	To consider what should be included in the development of a waste collection policy, including recycling. Also to include performance issues.	Andrew Walster Cllr Lancaster	Informal meeting 17/6/15	
	Pothole Strategy	To look in more detail at a Pothole Strategy for the city	Colin Knight Cllr Lancaster	Informal meeting 17/6/15	
	School Crossing Patrols	To look in more detail at those schools that have chosen to retain their crossing patrol and those schools where there will be none.	Colin Knight Cllr Lancaster	Informal meeting 17/6/15	
	Implications of Housing Policy	To look at the implications of changes to housing benefit which		Meeting 16.09.15	

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer	Source	Outcomes
	changes in London and subsequent influence on housing stock in Coventry	is leading to London Councils looking to house tenants outside of London and the Home Counties.			