

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
Social Care Health & Well-being Cabinet Board

9 December 2021

Report of the Head of Adult Services - Angela Thomas

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected All wards

SHARED LETTINGS POLICY 2021 - CONSULTATION EXERCISE OUTCOME

Purpose of the Report

To inform Members of the outcome of the recent 90-day consultation exercise on the Council & Tai Tarian's Shared Lettings Policy 2021 and seek approval of both the consequently amended Policy attached at Appendix 1 and its phased implementation as outlined in the report.

Executive Summary

A 90-day consultation exercise has been completed on the recently reviewed Council & Tai Tarian shared housing lettings policy. The original draft document has consequently been amended (a copy of the proposed updated Policy is attached at Appendix 1) and it is proposed this will be subject to the necessarily phased implementation outlined in the report.

Consultation exercise

What we did

In addition to the Policy itself, the following were made available in English and Welsh for 90 days:

- A Summary Policy document;
- an online and hard-copy consultation questionnaire with targeted questions;
- a consultation booklet for those unable to access the Council's Consultations webpage;
- a summary Plan on a Page document; and
- an Easy-read outline of the consultation exercise.

All registered applicants for housing by Tai Tarian, other housing associations with housing stock in the County Borough, and all other strategic housing partnership agencies were specifically notified of the consultation exercise. It was also generally publicised, both on the Council website and in staff and public on-line newsletters.

During the consultation period, Council and Tai Tarian officers attended a 'special' Social Care Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee meeting to provide an overview of the reviewed Policy and address questions raised in advance by Members.

Officers from Tai Tarian also liaised with officers from the Council's Public Protection Service to agree further minor changes around the Council's involvement in assessing the current housing conditions of applicants for housing by Tai Tarian.

Who responded

There were 11 online consultation questionnaires registered on the system but in 3 instances none of the questions were answered.

Of the remaining 8, 4 were applicants on the Tai Tarian Homes By Choice housing register, two were existing Tai Tarian tenants, 1 was a Tai Tarian employee, and the other a case-worker from a homelessness support agency based in Swansea.

Of these 8, only 4 (that is 2 of the housing applicants, the Tai Tarian employee, and the homelessness support agency case-worker) made supplementary comments.

Other than those given at the Special Scrutiny Committee, the only other consultations responses were received from Council Public Protection Service colleagues.

What they said

CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRES

It is obviously not possible to draw any conclusions as to the opinion of anyone else consulted on the basis of 8 questionnaire responses and so they have not been analysed or presented in any detail.

It is however clearly noteworthy that, of all those who were signposted to the online consultation exercise, including in excess of 2,700 registered applicants for

housing by Tai Tarian, negative responses were only received from the following very small numbers of respondents:

Consultation question subject	Disagreed
Factors to be taken into consideration when assessing eligibility.	2
The methods of assessment for applications.	2
Urgent banding criteria.	1
Gold banding criteria.	2
Silver banding criteria.	4
Bronze banding criteria.	4
The criteria for transfers.	1
The criteria for housing conditions.	3
The criteria for housing under-occupation.	2
That the proposals will improve the allocations process.	4
That the proposals will have no negative impact on any particular group of people.	4

Supplementary comments were only made by 4 of the 8 who completed consultation questionnaires. Again, no wider conclusions should be drawn from so few responses but they have been summarised into two themes and responded to by Tai Tarian as follows:

Access to housing themed comments (eligibility and prioritisation)

- The Housing Register should be open to all and not dependent upon need.
- Difficulty accessing social housing when already adequately housed, have access to children and pets.
- Unacceptable behaviour considerations.
- Bedroom tax (Dept. of Work and Pensions) restrictions which can impact upon property type eligibility.

Tai Tarian response

The Housing Register is open to all individuals who are not excluded as defined in the Policy; the legal framework for the allocation of accommodation requires reasonable preference to be demonstrated to certain categories of people in housing need. In addition, prioritisation is required because demand is greater than the supply of social housing with Tai Tarian currently receiving 140 housing applications per week. Factors such as unacceptable behaviour and income/affordability are considered on a case-by-case basis to ensure future tenancies are sustainable.

Assessment of need themed comments (support, behaviour and financial etc.)

- Queries about rent in advance and credit check requirements.
- The need for consistent and objective mechanisms for assessments (support needs, housing needs, financial assessments).
- More detail required about advice and assistance.

Tai Tarian response

Rent in advance is charged in accordance with the tenancy agreement at the start of the tenancy (one week in advance). Credit checks are undertaken to ensure applicants can afford to maintain rent payments, which is an important element of creating sustainable tenancies. Advice and assistance available to applicants applying and bidding for housing with Tai Tarian, together with the process for support need and affordability assessments is referenced within the policy.

SPECIAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

All questions raised by Scrutiny Committee Members were either answered to their satisfaction on the day or else further action by Tai Tarian to clarify matters was agreed.

MEETINGS WITH COUNCIL PUBLIC PROTECTION OFFICERS

The majority of changes requested were agreed to be procedural implementation issues that did not impact on the Policy itself.

What we changed as a result

CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRES

Because of the very small numbers involved and the fact that all objections raised in the 8 consultation questionnaires can be evidentially countered, no changes are proposed to the Policy because of the responses received.

SPECIAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

A number of minor changes or additions to the sections of the draft Policy questioned were consequently made. These are reflected in the revised Policy attached at Appendix 1, the implementation of which is not attendant on the completion of any outstanding further action agreed by Tai Tarian.

MEETINGS WITH COUNCIL PUBLIC PROTECTION OFFICERS

Agreed minor changes were made to relevant sections of the updated Policy attached at Appendix 1. The Policy itself will not be further affected by any

outstanding implementation procedural issues that are yet to be ironed out between the Council's Public Protection Service and Tai Tarian.

Phased Policy Implementation

It is proposed that the new Policy is fully operationally implemented by Tai Tarian from April 2022, upon the satisfactory completion of the actions contained within its project management framework.

This includes the Council's input to the review and migration of the Council's 300 plus Housing Options Team and half a dozen or so Environmental Health related applications.

In addition, this will enable time for staff training, publicity, IT migration and the development of new systems, including digital lettings or revisions to existing ones.

Financial Impacts

There are no known or anticipated additional financial implications for the Council as result of the proposal.

Integrated Impact Assessment

The Integrated Impact Assessment completed prior to the consultation exercise has been revisited in light of the outcome of the exercise. The number of consultation respondents was insufficient to allow for any statistically relevant additional extrapolation of equalities data for the whole Tai Tarian housing applicant population. The assessment attached at Appendix 2 has therefore been updated as far as is possible but its conclusions remain that:

- "There are potential gaps in the available equalities data because the data set only relates to 10% of current applicants to Tai Tarian for housing - i.e. those applicants who chose to provide it; however
- there are no currently known or anticipated negative impacts on any applicant, by virtue of the protected characteristics of any member of their household; and
- the potential positive impacts are maximised, as far as is currently possible."

Valleys Communities Impacts

The policy has no spatial impact on our valleys communities and does not link to the impacts identified in the Cabinet's response to the Council's Task and Finish

Group's recommendations on the Valleys.

Workforce Impacts

There are no known or anticipated workforce implications associated with this proposal.

Legal Impacts

The Policy has been reviewed and consulted on in line with the requirements of all relevant Housing legislation and guidance.

Risk Management Impacts

There are no known or anticipated risks associated with this proposal.

Crime and Disorder Impacts

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a duty on the Council in the exercise of its functions to have "due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent:

- a) Crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment);
- b) The misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area; and
- c) Re-offending the area"

There is no known or anticipated impact under the Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 from the proposal contained in this report.

Counter Terrorism Impacts

The proposal contained in this report is neither known nor anticipated to have any impact on the duty to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Impacts

Section 2(1) of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 introduced a general duty where a person exercising relevant functions must have regard (along with all other relevant matters) to the need to remove or minimise any factors which:

- (a) increase the risk of violence against women and girls, or
- (b) exacerbate the impact of such violence on victims.

The proposal contained in this report is neither known nor anticipated to have any negative impact on the above duty.

Consultation

The Policy has been the subject of a public consultation exercise as is required.

Recommendations

It is recommended that members giving due regard to the Integrated impact assessment:

- Members approve the Neath Port Talbot Council & Tai Tarian Shared Lettings Policy 2021 attached at Appendix 1 for phased implementation as set out in the report.
- The Head of Adult Services is given delegated authority in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member to agree with Tai Tarian's Director of Housing any further minor changes to the Policy necessary to affect its timely and effective phased implementation as set out in the report.
- The Head of Adult Services is given delegated authority in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Members to agree with Tai Tarian's Director of Housing any changes required to the Policy because of change in legislation, guidance or operating process, prior to its next overall periodic review.

Reasons for Proposed Decision

To ensure that the Council & Tai Tarian have a recently reviewed Shared Lettings Policy that is implemented in a timely and yet necessarily phased manner and which continues to comply with all applicable legislation and guidance until next periodically reviewed.

Implementation of Decision

The Policy document is proposed for adoption after the three day call-in period and subsequent phased implementation as outlined in the report.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council & Tai Tarian Shared Lettings Policy 2021.

Appendix 2 - Integrated Impacts Assessment

List of Background Papers

None

Officer Contact

For further information on this report item contact:

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