

Arun District Council

REPORT TO:	Housing & Well Being Committee
SUBJECT:	Update on Allocations policy and addendum with rural lettings policy
LEAD OFFICER:	Jayne Knight, Housing Options Manager
LEAD MEMBER:	<i>Councillor Carol Birch – Chair of Housing and Wellbeing Committee</i>
WARDS:	All
CORPORATE PRIORITY / POLICY CONTEXT / CORPORATE VISION: The Allocations Policy supports the Council’s objective of delivering the right homes in the right places by supporting those in our community that most need help, providing a safety net where necessary and working with people and organizations to meet different needs. The addendum, Rural Lettings Policy also meets this criterion.	
DIRECTORATE POLICY CONTEXT: All Local Authorities are required by law to have an up-to-date Allocation Policy which sets out how housing applications are assessed, and how social housing vacancies are allocated. The Rural Lettings Policy clarifies out how additional priority is applied to rural communities.	
FINANCIAL SUMMARY: None	

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To agree an addendum to the Allocations policy adopted at Housing & Wellbeing Committee June 2023, to incorporate the Rural Lettings Policy.
- 1.2 To update members on the delay to implement the Allocations policy adopted at Housing and Wellbeing Committee in June 2023

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To adopt the Rural Lettings Policy which sets out the procedure for letting properties advertised on our Choice Based Lettings scheme, which are located in the villages and parishes of the district where additional local connection

criteria are applied, giving priority to current residents or members of their families.

2.2 (a) To note that the implementation of the Allocations policy adopted at the Housing and Wellbeing Committee in June 2023 has been delayed alongside the implementation of the Abrisas software (part of the CIVICA project and

(b) To agree that the new Allocations Policy takes effect on the implementation of the Arbitras Software.

3.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3.1 Demand for properties in rural communities outstrips supply. To protect communities in the rural villages and parishes within Arun, a Rural Lettings Policy is required to ensure that the correct households are prioritised for housing via Arun's Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

3.2 The implementation of the new Allocations policy is delayed due to delays with the Abrisas project. The implementation of Abrisas will require re-registration of all the applicants on the housing register on the QL system under the new policy. Once the Abrisas system is operational the re-registration process will commence under the new Allocations policy. The new software is expected to be operational by June 2024.

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 Within the Arun District the areas defined as rural parishes are defined in appendix 1.

4.2 The parish local connection criteria are one of the following.

- Applicants who have lived in the parish for at least 2 years.
- Applicants who have previously lived in the parish for 3 years out of the last 5.
- Applicants with close relatives, generally defined as parents, adult children, and siblings who have lived continuously in the parish for 5 years.
- Persons who have permanent full-time employment or an offer of permanent employment which provided an important service to the local community and who need to live locally to carry out their duties.
- Where there are no bids from applicants who meet the above criteria, other applicants may be considered for the property.

4.3 This policy ensures that 100% of all vacancies (including First time lettings of new build homes will be allocated to applicants who have a connection to a rural parish, as outlined above.

- 4.4 The above included within the Allocations Policy but was left out of the revised policy by mistake. therefore, an addendum had been created to cover the Rural lettings criteria.
- 4.5 The Allocations policy adopted at Housing and Wellbeing committee in June 2023, will be implemented with the new Abrisas software. The implementation of Abrisas has been delayed due to issues identified during the testing process which required changes to be made, for the system to be satisfactory for our needs.
- 4.6 The new policy requires changes that can only be implemented in Civica. Each applicant on the current housing register will be invited to re-apply to the new system and their application will be assessed under the new Allocations policy. This is going to be a time-consuming process, with over 2100 applicants on the housing register, therefore we have not implemented the new policy on the old system. In the meantime, all applications are still being processed under the old Allocation Policy.
- 4.7 The re-registration process may see a potential reduction in the number of applications to the new system. There may be current applications who do not wish to re-apply under the new system and policy. The re-registration process may require additional short term temporary resource to ensure the work is completed within the required timeframe.
- 4.8 We will also need to consider that not all applicants will have the ability to apply online or carry out the re-registration process themselves.
- 4.9 We intend to run drop- in sessions at the offices where officers will be available to assist applicants.

5.0 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 None required.

6.0 OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

- 6.1 To approve the Rural Lettings Policy, protecting current residents and family members of rural parishes, giving them preferential allocation of available housing stock within the rural community.
- 6.2 To not adopt the Rural Lettings Policy therefore not applying additional preference to households or their families within rural communities.

7.0 COMMENTS BY THE GROUP HEAD OF FINANCE AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

7.1 This is an update report with one addendum but there are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 None

9.0 COMMENTS OF THE GROUP HEAD OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE & MONITORING OFFICER

9.1 Committee is asked to agree an addendum to the Allocations policy adopted at Housing and Wellbeing Committee June 2023, to incorporate the Rural Lettings Policy which was left out by mistake. There are no legal or governance implications.

9.2 Committee is also asked to note the reasons for the delay to implement the Allocations policy adopted at Housing and Wellbeing Committee in June 2023 and to agree that the implementation of the policy be delayed until the new software is in place. This decision is important in clarifying that though there is a new policy the start date of the policy is to be coterminous with the implementation of the Arbitras Software.

10.0 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

10.1 None identified.

11.0 HEALTH & SAFETY IMPACT

11.1 None identified.

12.0 PROPERTY & ESTATES IMPACT

12.1 The Rural lettings Policy maintains local communities, giving preference to households already resident or their families. The preference gives the opportunity to keep properties within the existing community, or the extended community.

13.0 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) / SOCIAL VALUE

13.1 This policy will give wider benefit and added social value to the local communities identified by the Rural Gazetteer in the Rural Lettings policy.

14.0 CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT/SOCIAL VALUE

14.1 None identified.

15.0 CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

15.1 None identified.

16.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT

16.1 None identified.

17.0 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION / DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS

17.1 None identified.

CONTACT OFFICER:

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Appendix 1 – Rural Lettings Policy

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment