

Committees: Community and Children's Services Committee – For Decision Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee – For Information	Dated: 03/11/2022
Subject: Local Lettings Policies – CoLPAI and Isleden House	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1, 2 & 4
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	£
What is the source of Funding?	
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Executive Director of Community & Children's Services	For Decision
Report authors: Liam Gillespie, Head of Housing Management	

Summary

This report seeks approval from Members to implement Local Lettings Policies in respect of two housing developments which will provide a total of 69 new homes for social rent, at Isleden House (three homes) and the City of London Primary Academy Islington (CoLPAI) development (66 homes). The draft Policies, which are enabled by the City Corporation's main Housing Allocations Scheme, set out how the homes will be allocated and provide for direct offers to be made to existing Housing Register applicants with a specified local connection to the two new housing schemes.

The policies will maximise the benefit of the new homes to local applicants with high assessed needs, while ensuring that homes within the City Corporation's current stock are freed up for allocation to Housing Register applicants.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Approve the draft Local Lettings Policies for the 66 homes at the CoLPAI development and the three new homes at Isleden House

Main Report

Background

1. The City Corporation operates a Housing Allocations Scheme (“the Scheme”) in accordance with its obligations under the Housing Act, 1996. The Scheme describes how the City Corporation’s Housing Register will be managed and vacant homes allocated to applicants. The Housing Register is maintained by the Housing Needs Team within the Housing Division of DCCS.
2. In normal circumstances, vacant homes are advertised on the Choice Based Lettings system, through which eligible applicants on the Housing Register may bid for each property. The highest-placed applicant (according to the number of points given to their application) will then be allocated the property.
3. The Scheme provides that Local Lettings Policies may be adopted by the City Corporation in certain circumstances, including the allocation of homes in new developments. Local Lettings Policies take the vacant homes outside the usual Choice Based Lettings system and allow the Housing Needs Team to make direct offers to eligible applicants, to meet local needs more easily and make targeted offers to households with the highest needs.
4. Once direct offers are exhausted, any vacant homes will be allocated in the usual way, including through Choice Based Lettings.
5. Some Members may recall that a Local Lettings Policy was adopted in 2014 to manage the letting of 43 new homes at Horace Jones House in Southwark, which proved successful in enabling the City Corporation to meet the needs of many local housing applicants from its own Housing Register and in managing nominations from the London Borough of Southwark.

Current Position

6. Local Lettings Policies are proposed for:
 - the 66 new homes to be provided as part of the City of London Primary Academy Islington (“CoLPAI”) development, adjacent to Golden Lane Estate
 - three new homes which are being provided as part of the Isleden House in-fill project in Islington
7. The nomination rights for the CoLPAI development are split 50/50 between the City Corporation and the London Borough of Islington, where the City Corporation will let 33 homes. At Isleden House, Islington will nominate an applicant for one property, with the remaining two being allocated by the City Corporation.

Proposals

8. Local Lettings Policies are intended to maximise the benefit of new housing developments for local residents. The use of direct offers ensures that homes are

allocated to those with the highest needs, without relying on applicants to place bids through the Choice Based Lettings system.

9. The proposed policies will benefit people currently living locally to the developments at Golden Lane Estate and Isleden House, by providing homes that better meet their needs (for example, families living in overcrowded accommodation who wish to remain in the area in which they currently live).
10. By making direct allocations in the first instance to current tenants requiring a transfer, a significant number of existing homes at Isleden House and Golden Lane Estate will be made available to people on the City's Housing Register. The policies, therefore, have the potential to help more than just the 35 households who will be allocated a new home by the City Corporation at CoLPAI and Isleden House.
11. Direct offers will be made to current tenants requiring a transfer and with at least twelve months' residence at either Isleden House or the Golden Lane Estate. The offers will be made to those applicants assessed as being in greatest need according to the Housing Allocations Scheme's points-based system. Where two applicants have the same assessed points, the date of registration will be used to determine priority.
12. Any homes remaining after the initial offers are made will be allocated as normal in accordance with the Housing Allocations Scheme. This may include making direct offers to Housing Register applicants with high priority living on other City Corporation estates, or non-resident applicants with high assessed needs.
13. The Local Lettings Policies will support the following aims:
 - Making the best use of new and existing housing stock, to maximise benefit to Housing Register applicants
 - Enabling local residents to share in the benefits of new developments and in-fill schemes
 - Supporting community cohesion by allowing tenants to remain in the local area in which they are settled
 - Ensuring that applicants with specific needs are offered a new home locally which meets those needs (e.g., those requiring an adaptable home)
14. The primary group of applicants that will benefit from this approach will be families living in overcrowded conditions, however some other important needs will also be met through the provision of homes to applicants requiring an accessible flat.
15. The policies will free up a significant number of smaller homes, which will be made available to single applicants and couples on the Housing Register.
16. Applicants with higher assessed priority are likely to have a medical or welfare need (or multiple needs), and the suggested approach will therefore support the City Corporation's aims of supporting the most vulnerable in our local communities through the allocation of settled accommodation, with a Secure tenancy, at social rent.

17. The Local Lettings Policies will lapse after twelve months, which will give time for all affected properties to be completed and let.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Legal implications

18. Local Lettings Policies are permitted in accordance with the Housing Act, 1996 s.166A (6). This provision enables housing authorities to allocate particular accommodation to 'persons of a particular description', whether or not they fall within the reasonable preference categories listed at s.166A (3). Such policies may be employed to meet a wide variety of policy aims and housing management objectives.

Equalities implications

19. The proposed Policies have been subjected to a full Equality Analysis (EA). The EA has not identified any negative equalities impacts of the proposed policies. Several positive impacts have been identified, for instance in relation to disabled applicants, who will have greater access to suitable housing accommodation. The allocation of larger housing units to families currently living in overcrowded accommodation will also free up a significant number of smaller homes, which will be allocated to single, working-age applicants. Low-income workers with a City connection make up a significant percentage of the current Housing Register.

Conclusion

20. Members are asked to approve the implementation of two Local Lettings Policies to govern the allocation of the 69 new homes being delivered at the CoLPAI development and the Isleden House in-fill project. The draft Policies, which are enabled by the City Corporation's main Housing Allocations Scheme, set out how the homes will be allocated and provide for direct offers to be made to existing Housing Register applicants with a specified local connection to the two new housing schemes.

21. The policies will maximise the benefit of the new homes to local applicants with high assessed needs, while ensuring that homes within the City Corporation's current stock are freed up for allocation to Housing Register applicants.

Appendices

- Appendix One: Draft Local Lettings Policies – CoLPAI and Isleden House
- Appendix Two: Equalities Impact Assessment

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