

# LetSelect Newsletter

## January 2013

### Changes to how we allocate housing

The Council has a policy which sets out how Council and Housing Association properties are allocated in the Borough. Due to the Government introducing important new laws surrounding housing and benefits, the Council is now reviewing this policy. The main areas being looked at are who can join the waiting list, and the priority given to different people and situations.

The Council's Housing Nominations policy is now out for consultation until the 11<sup>th</sup> February 2013, and we want to hear your views on the following issues:

- Only allowing people with a local connection to Fareham joining the Housing Waiting List.
- The level of priority given to those who have served in HM forces in the last 5 years.
- The level of vacancies given to those that are making a positive contribution to the local community – through employment, volunteering and fostering.
- Restricting choice for applicants who have been assessed as having an urgent housing need.

*\*A local connection is defined as a person who has lived in the Borough for 18 months, permanent employment in the Borough or having a close member of family living in the Borough for at least 5 years who is required to give/receive support. A close member of family is defined as mother/father/sister/brother/adult child.*

Your comments and views will help draft the policy which will then be submitted to Members in March. If you are interested in having your say please call The Allocations Officer on 01329 236100 ext 2471 during office hours, and you will be sent a questionnaire and a pre-paid envelope to return to us. Alternatively, you can answer the questions via our website:

**[www.fareham.gov.uk/consultation](http://www.fareham.gov.uk/consultation) (or click on the 'have your say' icon on our homepage)**

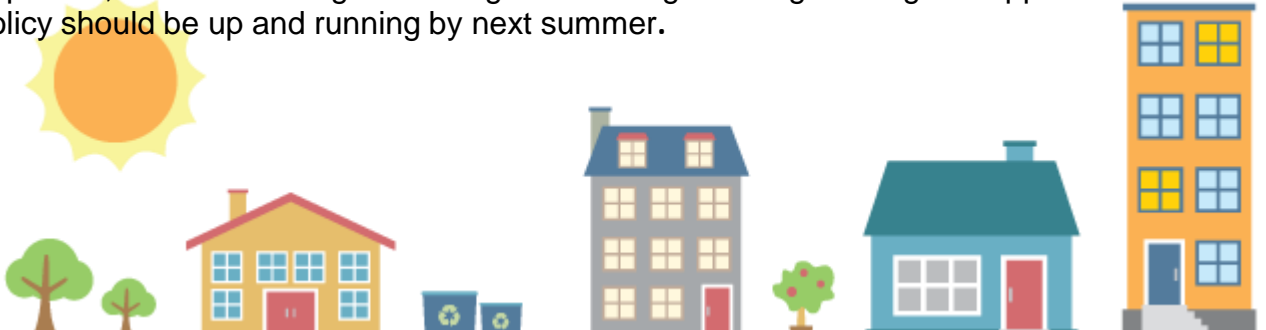
The full Allocations Policy:

**[www.fareham.gov.uk/pdf/consultations/121026\\_FinalDraftAllocationsPolicy.pdf](http://www.fareham.gov.uk/pdf/consultations/121026_FinalDraftAllocationsPolicy.pdf)**

Summary version:

**[www.fareham.gov.uk/pdf/consultations/HousingAllocationPolicyChangesSummary.pdf](http://www.fareham.gov.uk/pdf/consultations/HousingAllocationPolicyChangesSummary.pdf)**

Your answers will help make sure we have got the changes right. Once the new policy is approved, we will then begin to re-register existing Housing Waiting List applicants. The new policy should be up and running by next summer.



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### Important Changes to Benefits

The Welfare Reform Act became law on 8 March 2012. The Act introduces the biggest changes to welfare benefits for over 60 years. Some of the changes have come in already while others will not happen until next year.

These changes are likely to have a significant impact. Some people are already struggling to pay their rent and it is important to know how these changes may affect you. People of pension age will not be affected by most of the changes.

From April 2013, working age tenants in a council or housing association property will have their Housing Benefit cut if they live in a homes with more rooms than their household size would need (The change does not apply to pension-age claimants). Under new rules, one bedroom will be allowed for:

- each adult couple
- any person aged 16 or over
- two children of the same sex under 16
- two children under 10 regardless of their sex
- any other child
- a carer (who does not normally live with you) if you or your partner need overnight care.

The cuts to Housing Benefits for spare bedrooms are at a fixed percentage: 14% for one bedroom, and 25% for two or more bedrooms.

**EXAMPLE** - Rob and Tracey have two teenage girls aged 13 and 15, and live in a three bedroom council house. Their rent is £115 per week and they currently receive full Housing Benefit of £115 per week.

Under the new rules their children will be expected to share a bedroom and so they will be treated as having one spare.

A 14% reduction of £16.10 is applied to their eligible rent of £115 which will mean their Housing Benefit will be reduced to £98.90.

They will be expected to make up the shortfall of £16.10 a week from their other income.

