How we allocate housing is changing

Since the introduction of the Localism Act 2011 and in response to changes being introduced through the Welfare Reform Act, Fareham Borough Council has been looking at how we allocate housing to people. We are proposing a number of changes which are outlined below.

Changes to who can qualify for the Housing Waiting List

Fareham Borough Council currently operates an open waiting list for housing. This means that if someone is eligible (i.e. not subject to Immigration) and live in the United Kingdom they can apply to join the waiting list. Most properties are only available to people with a local connection to Fareham (see below). However, a small number of properties could be offered to someone with no connection to Fareham.

Under the changes we are proposing, only people with a local connection to Fareham would be able to join the Housing Waiting List.

What do you mean by a local connection to Fareham?

For someone to have a local connection they would have to be:

- Living in Fareham non-stop for the last 18 months
- Living in the Borough for at least 3 continuous years out of the last 5 years.
- Working in the Borough. The job must be permanent and for at least 16 hours per week.
- Moving to the area to be near to a close member of their family to give or receive care and support. The family member must live in Fareham and have been resident continuously for the last 5 years or more.
- Moving to receive specialist care and support which they can only receive in Fareham.
How much income and savings can I have?

The amount of income and savings someone can have before they are considered to have No Housing Need has been lowered.

The new limits are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Property Need allowed</th>
<th>Maximum Savings and Income allowed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Bedroom</td>
<td>£30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Bedroom</td>
<td>£39,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Bedrooms or more</td>
<td>£46,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Households with more than £16,000 savings or assets will normally be considered to be able to meet their housing need through renting privately, but each case will be assessed individually.

Households guilty of unacceptable behaviour

At the moment there is a test to decide if a household is guilty of unacceptable behaviour. Depending on the result, the household may be allowed to join the Housing Waiting List without penalty, or be placed into Band 4 (the lowest band) until they can show that their behaviour has improved.

Under the new policy this test will be been removed and the Council will be able to decide who will be excluded from joining the Housing Waiting List based on their behaviour and past tenancy conduct.

The types of behaviour considered to be unacceptable are listed in Appendix 2 of the new Policy

Working out Overcrowding

Currently overcrowding is assessed by using the space standard. Fareham proposes to use the bedroom standard. This works out how many bedrooms a family needs based on the number of children and their ages. We will also having the option of using the Council’s Environmental Health Officers to work out overcrowding when necessary.
Changes to assessing who gets priority on the waiting list

Changes have been made to the priority we give to different housing situations.

To help this we propose to rename the bands from 0, 1, 2, 3 & 4 to Urgent, High, Medium, Low & No Housing Need.

The main changes to the priority awards are:

- People living in self contained (these have no shared facilities) private rented accommodation will be placed in the Low Housing Need band, along with households sharing with family or friends, currently these groups are in Band 2.

- People living in supported housing and they are unable to get accommodation in the private rented sector will be placed in the High Housing Need band - this group is currently not recognised at all.

- Certain serving and former serving armed forces personnel will be placed in the Urgent Housing Need band - this group is currently not given any additional priority.

- Existing social housing tenants under occupying their properties will be placed in either High or Medium Housing Need depending on the number of rooms they under occupy by, currently this group are in Band 3.

- At the moment people who apply for a higher priority on the grounds of medical and welfare issues have to complete a Medical and Welfare Application form. This is then assessed by the Housing Waiting List Officer who decides whether there is a case to be put before the Medical and Welfare Panel. Under the new proposals applicants will still be asked to complete a Medical and Welfare Application form, but this will be assessed by a Housing Options Officer, who will gather all the information needed to decide the level of priority awarded. This decision will then be reviewed by a senior officer.

- The final change to the banding system is the ending of cumulative need. This is where an applicant or someone in their household has a range of needs which on their own would not give them priority, but can be considered together to give them priority. Applicants will now be awarded on the single need which gives them highest priority.
Supporting people who work or volunteer

The Government want to reward those people who are making a positive contribution in their local community through employment or volunteering. Fareham Borough Council will advertise a quarter of all vacancies giving preference to those households that can show they are in employment or actively volunteering.

Have your say on the proposed changes until 11 February 2013

We would like to know what you think about the proposed changes to the way we allocate housing in Fareham. You can have your say by completing this short survey.

You can also 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.

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.

The closing date for responses is 11 February 2013