

# Homemove Scheme

Allocations Policy

April 2015

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If you, or somebody you know, would like the information contained in this document in large print, Braille, tape/CD or in another language please contact Wealden District Council on 01323 443322 or [info@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:info@wealden.gov.uk)

## 1. Introduction

It is Wealden District Council's policy to operate a Choice Based Lettings scheme. This is the Council's scheme as required under Section 167 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) ('the 1996 Act'). It sets out the priorities and procedures for the letting of council housing, and our nominations to Registered Providers (RPs) housing (previously Registered Social Landlords/Housing Associations). The scheme applies to new applicants and existing Council and Registered Providers tenants in Wealden on the Housing Register.

This Policy meets the requirements set out in the 1996 Act, giving reasonable preference to those applicants in greatest need. This policy has also had regard to the Code of Guidance for Allocations "*Fair and Flexible: statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England*" (December 2009), the Code of Guidance for choice based lettings (2008) and relevant case law. It incorporates the Council's key aims and objectives outlined in its Housing and Homelessness Strategies.

The Council is committed to an allocations scheme that offers greater choice to all those seeking housing and enables people to make well-informed decisions about their housing options, across all tenures. Sussex Homemove will help improve the sustainability of our housing stock to maximise its effectiveness and encourage residents to have a stake in their community.

Under the Homemove scheme, applicants for housing (including transfers) are placed in one of four Bands of housing need according to their circumstances. All applicants become members of Homemove and actively search for and chose a home through the scheme. Vacant properties are advertised online at [www.homemove.org.uk](http://www.homemove.org.uk) and through personalised property lists called 'My Homemove', and applicants are able to bid for properties. Adapted properties will be classified and advertised as suitable for applicants with a matching mobility need.

Consideration has been made to all relevant legislation including, but not exclusively:-

- The Equality Act 2010
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The Localism Act 2011

Regard has also been given to Wealden District Council's own policies including, but not exclusively:-

- The Wealden Equality Scheme 2011-14
- The Housing Strategy 2008-13
- Homelessness Strategy 2008-13
- Non-statutory Local Plan 2006-11
- Wealden District Council's HRA Business Plan
- Wealden's Community Strategy

## **Housing Register Partners**

The following Registered Social Landlords are partners to the Housing Register:

- Affinity Sutton Homes Ltd
- Town and Country Housing Group
- Raglan Housing Association Limited
- Southern Housing Group Limited
- Orbit Housing Association
- Hyde Housing Association Limited
- Moat Homes Ltd
- Home Group limited
- Anchor Trust
- Southdown Housing Association Limited
- John Grooms Housing Association
- Places for people
- Hanover Housing Association
- Saxon Weald
- Sussex Housing and Care

## **2. Applying to join the Housing Register**

### **How to apply**

All applicants and tenants requesting re-housing or a transfer must complete an application form to be placed on the housing register. Applications can be completed by going to [www.wealden.gov.uk](http://www.wealden.gov.uk) and following the links to Housing / Applying for Social Housing. Alternatively, a paper form can be requested by email to [housingoptions@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:housingoptions@wealden.gov.uk) or by calling 01323 443322.

Community Help Points are also available at the Library, High Street, Uckfield and the Library, High Street, Heathfield.

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If you need help to complete an application, this can be arranged by appointment with a member of housing staff by calling 01323 443380 or at local Citizen Advice Bureaux.

## **Eligibility to join the Housing Register**

Most applicants will be eligible to join the Housing Register. However, by virtue of Section 160A of the 1996 Act (but subject to certain exceptions set out therein) the Council cannot allocate housing accommodation to the following: -

- (a) A person who is subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 unless that person falls within an exemption specified by the Secretary of State.
- (b) A person from abroad who is ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation by virtue of any regulation made by the Secretary of State.

## **Other applicants who do not qualify to join the Housing Register**

The Localism Act 2011 gives local authorities the power to set their own entry requirements to the housing register.

By virtue of the Localism Act 2011, the following groups will **not** qualify to join the Council's housing register or be entitled to remain on the Register:-

- Home owners or owners of land or other property with sufficient equity to be able to secure suitable alternative accommodation at market rent or to buy a home
- Applicants living outside of the UK.
- Applicants, including transfer applicants, with a combined gross household income of £30,500 per year or more who are considered able to secure suitable alternative accommodation in the private rented sector or to purchase accommodation, such as low cost home ownership.
- Applicants, including transfer applicants, with savings or assets, in excess of £6,000 who are considered able to secure suitable alternative accommodation in the private rented sector or to purchase accommodation such as low cost home ownership. Exceptions may be made on a case by case basis for example, applicants for sheltered accommodation and/or leasehold, or those with severe mobility needs that cannot be met with the funds available. This threshold may be adjusted in line with Housing Benefit Regulations should savings thresholds change in the future for benefit entitlement.
- Applicants with no local connection to the Wealden District as defined by the Council's Allocations Policy as defined at section 4.

- Applicants or a member of their household who has or had significant rent arrears with a private or social landlord unless they have made regular payments towards the arrears, in addition to regular rent payments, for at least six months.
- Applicants who owe money to Wealden District Council for unpaid rent and deposit in advance loans, deposit guarantee pay outs **or** cost for repairs and reimbursements incurred during or after holding a former council tenancy.
- Transfer applicants whose property is found to have damage or disrepair which is the responsibility of the tenant to rectify, until such time as the tenant has rectified the issues or reimbursed the Council for the costs of repairs.
- An applicant or a member of their household who has been identified as being involved in anti-social behaviour until they have sustained a period of at least 12 months with no reports of anti-social behaviour against them and are able to demonstrate how they have changed their behaviour.
- Anyone under 16 years of age although applicants under the age of 18 will only be offered accommodation in exceptional circumstances
- Applicants who have been requested to attend “tenant training” courses but failed to attend.

The following members of the Armed and Reserved Forces will be **exempt** from the above ‘local connection’ qualification criteria:-

A person who:-

a) is serving in the regular forces or who has served in the regular forces within five years of the date of their application for an allocation of housing under Part 6 of the 1996 Act;

(b) has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person’s spouse or civil partner where—

- (i) the spouse or civil partner has served in the regular forces; and
- (ii) their death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service; or

(c) is serving or has served in the reserve forces and who is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to that service.

Section 160A of the 1996 Act further provides that if the Council decides that an applicant for housing accommodation is ineligible for one of the reasons given above it must notify the applicant in writing and set out the reasons for its decision. Such a notice, if not received by the applicant, is treated as having being given if it is made available at the Council’s offices for a reasonable period for collection by him/her or on his/her behalf.

There is a right under Part VI of the 1996 Act to ask the Council to review a decision not to accept an application to join the Housing Register. A senior officer from the Council, not involved in the decision to exclude the applicant, will carry out the review.

We will write to anyone who is being excluded from the Housing Register giving our reasons, the length of time for the exclusion and their right to request a review of the decision. After the review we will provide our decision, the reasons for it and the facts that we have taken into account. See Section 12 for further guidance.

Provisions contained within the Localism Act 2011 may mean locally defined criteria for who may or may not join the Housing Register, will be set. It is possible that applicants who may currently be entitled to join the register may no longer be eligible.

**A fresh application will be considered if:**

- The applicant's immigration status has changed, or
- The applicant can demonstrate good behaviour for a sustained period of time

**Rent arrears**

Applicants who are tenants of the Council or a Registered Provider who are subject to a Notice of Seeking Possession or Postponed Possession Order will not normally be eligible for an offer of accommodation unless circumstances are exceptional. Applicants who have lower level rent arrears or any historical or former tenant arrears will also be ineligible for an offer of accommodation unless the debt is cleared or a firm and sustained commitment is made to repay their housing debt and they have entered into an acceptable agreement to clear the debt.

Applicants with rent arrears from a private sector tenancy may be considered intentionally homeless resulting in a lower priority banding under the scheme. Any applicant with arrears from a private sector tenancy will be encouraged to seek independent money advice and to make all reasonable efforts to clear the debt.

**Who can be included on the application?**

- Anyone who is part of the household at the date of registration and is still in occupation.
- A partner, someone living with the applicant or who is married or have undertaken a commitment through a civil ceremony or otherwise would be reasonably expected to reside.
- Dependent children under 18 years who live with the applicant, or who might reasonably be expected to live with them, where the applicant is the parent or guardian in receipt of Child Benefit or has an agreement for residency. Where

shared residency or contact arrangements for children exist between ex-partners, only in exceptional circumstances would it be reasonable to expect a child who has a home with one parent to be provided with another so that s/he may reside with another parent as well. Only in cases where it is imperative that care is shared between separated parents might it be reasonable to expect a child to reside with both parents.

- Someone not currently living with the applicant but for whom it would be reasonable to do so, for example: a relative needing care but unable to live with the applicant at present due to a genuine lack of, or the unsuitability of the present accommodation.
- A carer where the applicant can demonstrate that a live-in carer is essential, one has been identified and has moved in with the household or is ready to do so when accommodation becomes available.
- Any other non-dependant adult who is normally permanently resident with the applicant.

The decision of whether other persons normally reside with the applicant and, who is considered part of the household, is a matter for determination by the Council based on the facts of the case and the relevant factors involved, including appropriate case law.

### **Under 18's**

Anyone over 16 can join our housing register (subject to the exclusion criteria above), although we will not usually offer them a permanent tenancy until they are over 18. In the event that there is an urgent housing need, the young person will be referred to Children's Services for a "child in need" assessment and appropriate, supported accommodation if required. An offer of permanent accommodation will only be made if we are satisfied that the young person is able to live independently, able to sustain a tenancy, and has an identified package of support available to them.

However, a person under the age of 18 does not have the legal capacity to hold a tenancy. Therefore, the Council will normally expect that any tenancy granted to a person who is under 18 will be held by Trustees until that person attains the age of 18.

### **Applicants who have the financial means to secure their own accommodation**

Section 166A of the 1996 Act allows allocation schemes to give less priority to an applicant who has the financial means to meet their own housing costs. Applicants who are considered financially able to meet their own housing costs will generally not qualify to join the housing register and includes owner-occupiers, land owners and/or those applicants with savings or assets over £6,000, a combined household income of £30,500 or substantial equity in land or property that would enable them to



obtain accommodation suitable to meet their needs. These applicants will be provided with advice and guidance on other housing options. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Where an applicant has financial means, applications will be considered in the following circumstances:

- Where it is not possible to adapt the current accommodation to meet the needs of the owner/occupier's medical condition.
- Where the applicant does not have sufficient resources to adapt the existing accommodation to meet the needs of the owner/occupier's medical condition and they cannot afford to buy or rent suitable alternative housing.
- The sale of the property would not enable the owner/occupier to purchase or rent an alternative property suitable to their needs.
- At the discretion of the Head of Housing and Property Services, the Council may exempt certain Wealden District Council leaseholders from the financial qualifying criteria, to enable them to join the housing register. This discretion would apply to Council leaseholders who are currently and were a leaseholder of their existing property, prior to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014. Any application would be at the instigation of the Council on a scheme by scheme basis, following an assessment of affordability and housing needs.

### **Tenants who wish to transfer**

Any secure Council tenant or any assured tenant of any of the authority's partners on the Housing Register living in the district.

The Council will not normally make an offer of accommodation to a Transfer applicant where the tenant is guilty of a breach of tenancy resulting in:

- A valid Notice of Seeking Possession or Postponed Possession Order for rent arrears.
- Housing Act Injunction, Anti-Social Behaviour Order, Notice of Seeking Possession, Postponed Possession Order or demoted tenancy (if adopted) granted as a result of the breach of other aspects of the tenancy agreement.

In all Transfer cases the tenant's conduct and rent history will be taken into account in determining the suitability for an offer of accommodation.

Priority will be offered to Transfer applicants who are required to move to avoid financial hardship created by a reduction in housing benefit due to under occupation.

Mutual Exchanges (Assignments pursuant to Section 92 of the Housing Act 1985) are not included within this allocation policy.

## **Transfer tenants' Right to Move**

Tenants who wish to move within or into Wealden from another area are able to join the housing register in order to take up work. Subject to the following considerations:-

### ***Need to move***

The Council must be satisfied the tenant has a need to move (as opposed to a wish to move) and that failure to meet that need would result in hardship. Factors that would be taken into account when establishing if there is a need to move, would include:

- The distance and/or travel time between work and home
- The availability of transport
- The nature of work and whether similar opportunities were available more locally
- Any medical conditions or childcare affected if they couldn't move
- The length of the employment contract
- If failure to move would lessen opportunities to improve their employment circumstances, e.g. promotion

### ***Work***

The work being undertaken (or offered) cannot be short term, marginal in nature, or ancillary to work in another district. Voluntary work is also excluded. The Council will need to consider whether work is regular or intermittent – as may be the case for self employed people, and the period of work. Contracts of less than 12 months may be considered short term and therefore excluded. Work of less than 16 hours a week would be considered marginal in nature. The level of earnings is also relevant.

If the work is occasionally in Wealden, but their main place of work is elsewhere, the work would be excluded from the regulations.

Voluntary work is excluded.

Apprenticeships are included, provided the contract is for at least 12 months.

### ***Verification***

The Council will require evidence that the work, or job offer is genuine and documentary evidence will be required such as:

- Employment contract
- Formal offer letter
- Acceptance letter
- Wage slips and bank statements

- Tax and benefits information

### **The Transfer Quota**

This means properties which are reserved for transfer applicants. Such properties will be identified in the Homemove magazine and online by a 'T' symbol against the property advert, designating the property for transfer cases only.

The transfer quota can be applied because the Council recognises that in certain instances transfer applicants will have limited priority under the banding scheme and that this could prevent or discourage transfers which would ultimately be beneficial to other non-transfer applicants looking for accommodation.

The number of properties to be reserved in this way will be no more than 20% of all new lettings in any financial year (that is 1 April to 31 March). Within this 20%, 1% of total lets (3-4 properties a year) will be prioritised for tenants meeting the Right to Move criteria.

### **3. Registration and Assessment**

All applicants, including tenants, must apply by completing the Council's housing application form. They will need to validate their and their household's identity, income, previous addresses and other aspects of the application. For identity purposes photo identification such as a passport, birth certificate or driving licence is required for all household members. For income purposes, a recent bank statement, recent wage slips or a recent letter regarding state benefits or tax credits should be provided. Proof of other aspects of an application will be requested on a case-by-case basis.

- Once accepted onto the Housing Register an initial housing needs assessment will be completed, based on the information on the registration form and any other relevant information made available to the Council.
- Medical priority of the applicant/s and/or those to be re-housed with them is assessed, where appropriate, based on the information supplied by the applicant using the Council's Self Assessment Medical form and information supplied by applicant's GP where appropriate. .

Multiple requests for medical assessment may result in the Council charging applicants the cost of referrals to the medical advisor.

- Once assessed, the applicant is placed in the appropriate bedroom category, (see section 5) and into one of the four priority bandings in date order of registration.

The Council will write to the applicant to inform him/her of their registration date and registration number and give the following information:

- Priority Band and reason for it.
- Priority date, which is the date the application is received, or in the case of homeless applicants, the date that Wealden District Council accepts a duty to re-house.
- The minimum and maximum bedroom size they can bid for.
- Mobility group (physical disability level) if applicable.
- Advise the applicant that they have a right to see the information held in relation to the application. If they consider any details or decision to be inaccurate then they can request a review.

#### **4. Local connection to Wealden**

Applicants without a local connection will not be eligible to join the housing register. Applicants will be defined as having a local connection to the Wealden District if one of the following criteria are met:-

- They currently live within the Wealden district and have done so for at least three years out of the last five
- They have 'established employment' within the Wealden district
- They have a close adult (over 18 years of age) relative (mother, father, adult children or siblings) who currently lives in Wealden and has resided in the district for at least five years continuously.
- There are exceptional reasons where failure to reside in the district would cause hardship to the applicant or others (to be agreed by the Housing Options and Strategy manager on a case by case basis)

For the purposes of this Allocations Policy, 'established employment' means: -

- A person employed on a permanent full time basis (37 hours) by an employer whose business or undertaking is located within the district; or
- A person employed on a permanent part time basis where the hours worked are not less than 16 hours per week by an employer whose business or undertaking is located within the district; or

- A person carrying out work on a self employed basis equivalent to or averaging not less than 16 hours per week where that person's business or undertaking is based within the district

## 5. Bedroom entitlement

The number of bedrooms an applicant is eligible for is based on the local housing allowance (LHA) criteria where one bedroom is allocated to each of the following:-

Single person or couple	1 bedroom
Two children under 16 of the same sex	1 bedroom
Two children under 10 of the same or opposite sex	1 bedroom
Any other child or person aged 16 or over	1 bedroom
An overnight carer if appropriate	1 bedroom

It should be noted that a second reception room will be considered available for use as a bedroom. For larger households who require four bedrooms or more, the prevailing housing stock in the district will mean that provision of accommodation may not be possible. Unborn children will generally not be taken into account until the birth and the applicant has supplied the child's birth certificate. Where there is a proven and overriding medical need, or regular over-night carer, the Council will consider allocating up to one additional bedroom, on a case by case basis.

**Table 1: Bedroom eligibility**

	Single Person	Childless Couple	1-Child Family	2-Child Family	3-Child Family	4+ Child Family
Studio flat	✓					
1 Bedroom property	✓	✓	✓			
2 Bedroom property			✓	✓		
3 Bedroom property				✓	✓	✓
4 Bedroom property					✓	✓

In deciding the appropriate size of a property, the age and gender of the children within the household are considered. For example a family with a male and female child where one is over 10 years old would be entitled to three bedroomed accommodation. However, same sex children and young people are considered able to share a bedroom until the age of 16. Therefore, for example, some two child

families are eligible for a two bedroomed property and other two child families are eligible for a three bedroomed property.

RPs may have different bedroom eligibility criteria which can affect the types of property some households can bid for. It is important that applicants check property adverts for detail on number of persons that can occupy the property before bidding.

### **Bedroom entitlement for foster carers**

Applicants who are an approved foster carer, will be entitled to one extra bedroom than their household would ordinarily be entitled to under this policy. This will only apply to:-

- Approved foster carers who have a child placed with them
- Approved foster carers who are between placements but only for a period of up to 52 consecutive weeks from the date of the last placement
- Newly approved foster carers but only for a period of up to 52 consecutive weeks from the date of the approval, if no child is placed with them during that period.

Prospective foster carers will not be entitled to an additional bedroom until they have been approved. Proof of approved status will be required before an additional bedroom entitlement will be awarded.

If the applicant is no longer an approved foster carer, this entitlement will cease.

## **6. How housing priority is decided**

### **Banding Structure**

The four priority Bands are:

#### **Band 'A'**

- Applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness within the meaning of Part VII of the 1996 Act but have yet to make an application for assistance and whose housing needs are assessed by the Council to be sufficiently severe to justify urgent priority.
- Homeless households owed a duty under s.193 of the 1996 Act by the Council and who have been placed in emergency accommodation
- Medical Priority A - where the housing conditions are having a life threatening or significantly adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or member of the household to be re-housed with them, so as to warrant emergency priority. Such cases may be referred for independent medical assessment.

- Council and housing association tenants under-occupying family sized accommodation in Wealden and are prepared to move to a smaller property within the terms of the Transfer Incentive Scheme (TIS).
- Transfer applicants needing permanent or temporary decant (move) where the property is imminently required for major repair or redevelopment within the Wealden District
- Cases where a Housing Order or Notice has been issued under Housing Act 2004. An award of Band A status under this category will only be done with the agreement of the Council's Housing Options and Strategy Manager and Property Services Manager.
- Releasing an adapted property or to make best use of adapted stock, where the tenant does not require adaptations or where the existing property cannot be adapted to meet the applicant's needs, to be determined by the Council.
- Move on from care or supported housing as agreed by the Housing Options and Strategy Manager and social care providers.
- Former and serving members of the regular and reserve Armed Forces (as defined by s.374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006) who have an urgent housing need, for example because they are homeless or have a medical or welfare need to move
- High priority transfer where there is significant imminent personal risk to the household if they remain to be agreed by the Head of Housing Services on a case-by-case basis
- High welfare needs – exceptional circumstances which warrant emergency priority – to be agreed by the Head of Housing Services on a case-by-case basis.

### **Band 'B'**

- Households who are owed a duty under s.193 or 195 of the 1996 Act and have a local connection to Wealden within the meaning of Part VII of the 1996 Act **and** who are accommodated by the Council in self contained temporary accommodation or are making their own temporary arrangements.
- Applicants who are pregnant and / or have a dependent child or children **and** who are living in insecure accommodation e.g. family, friends or other non-secure or licence agreement where the household is lacking one or more bedrooms **and** sharing amenities with another household.
- Severe Overcrowding - households lacking 2 or more separate bedrooms in accordance with the Bedroom Standard.

- Successors, other than spouse or partner, or similar approved by Housing Management for suitable alternative accommodation.
- Applicants living in accommodation which has been assessed as containing a 'category one' environmental health hazard and the property owner is unable to remedy the defects as specified by Property Services.
- Management Transfers – agreed by the Housing Services Manager for transfers on management grounds, to properties of same size and type.
- Medical Priority B - where the current housing conditions are having a major adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or on one of the household to be re-housed with them as recommended by the Council's medical advisor and approved by the Housing Options Team Leader .
- Ex-tenants returning from institutions e.g. rehabilitation where a commitment has been made in order to secure the relinquishment of a Council or RP tenancy on entering the institution.
- Medium welfare needs - circumstances which warrant priority – to be agreed by Housing Options and Strategy Manager on a case-by-case basis.

### **Band 'C'**

- Moderate Overcrowding - households lacking one separate bedroom in accordance with the Bedroom Standard.
- Council and Housing Association tenants under-occupying that do not qualify for the Transfer Incentive Scheme.
- Accepted homeless households where a duty has been discharged under s.193 or s.195 by way of an assured short-hold (a private rented sector offer) or non-secure tenancy e.g. Private Sector Lease (PSL) or Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) in private sector until such time as the landlord requires the property back within two years from the date of discharge, or the household's needs are no longer met unless offered permanent accommodation.
- Applicants who are homeless within the meaning of s.175 of the 1996 Act and have a local connection to Wealden, but who do not have a priority need or are intentionally homeless.
- Delivering a care plan - households identified in an Adult Social Care Plan where accommodation is required to assist in delivering a Care Plan or to relieve other social/welfare hardship as agreed between Adult Social Care & Housing Options Team Leader.
- Medical Priority C - where the current housing conditions are having an adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or on one of the household to be



re-housed with them as recommended by the Council's medical advisor and approved by the Housing Options Team Leader .

- Insanitary conditions that cannot be addressed by Environmental Health action including; lacking one or more of the following; a kitchen (e.g. sink and space for a cooker), an inside WC or a bathroom (e.g. basin and bath or shower).
- Other unsatisfactory housing conditions (e.g. substantial disrepair as assessed by Environmental Health).
- Applicants for sheltered housing where there is no higher need.
- Low welfare/hardship needs - people who need to move to a particular area in the district where failure to meet that need would cause hardship e.g. to give or receive support.

### **Band 'D'**

- Transfer applicants with no reasonable preference for housing.
- Home seekers with no reasonable preference for housing.
- Applicants in some categories of Bands A or B who have refused one offer of accommodation will remain in Band D for six months from the date of refusal
- Applicants who have rejected private rented sector offers intended to discharge homelessness duties.
- Applicants who have refused three offers of accommodation will remain in Band D for six months from the date of last refusal
- Applicants who have intentionally worsened their circumstances or manufactured destitution in order to increase their housing need and banding.

Applicants who continue to be owed a Part VII housing duty but who have resolved their own immediate housing need.

### **Medical and mobility needs**

Applicants who indicate that they or someone in their household have an illness or disability which is affected by their current housing situation, or who may be vulnerable on physical or mental health grounds and in need of settled accommodation, are requested to complete a medical self assessment form. The Housing Options Team considers this form, together with any relevant information from the General Practitioner, Hospital Consultant, or Occupational Therapist as appropriate. Where appropriate the Housing Options Team will also seek advice from the Council's independent Medical Advisor.

Assessments are made of the effect of present accommodation on the state of health of the applicant or anyone in the household who is to be re-housed with them. In

reaching the decision we will consider whether the overall effect of the housing situation on the household or any member of the household is sufficiently severe to warrant inclusion in a higher Band.

In each case the recommendation is based on a judgement of need. Applicants with medical needs will be placed in one of the following Bands:-

**Band 'A'** Medical Priority A will be recommended where the applicant or one of the household to be re-housed with them, has a life threatening condition which is seriously affected by their current housing. All recommendations for Medical Band 'A' are referred to the Council's independent medical advisor. E.g. bed-blockers or applicants unable to access their accommodation due to disability or significant medical needs.

**Band 'B'** Medical Priority B will be recommended where the current housing conditions are having a major adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or on one of the household to be re-housed with them.

**Band 'C'** Medical Priority C will be recommended where the current housing conditions are having an adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or on one of the household which creates a particular need for them to move.

It should be noted that there must be a clear link between the current housing and its affect on the applicant or household member's health condition. An applicant or household member suffering from a medical condition who are living in appropriate housing will not be awarded any housing priority on medical grounds.

Where a household is overcrowded and/or there are other adverse circumstances, the medical assessment will take into account the effect of the overcrowding and the adverse circumstances on the health of the household.

Priority for disabled adapted properties will be given to applicants whose mobility needs match that provided by the available property, including in areas where the Parish Lettings Policy (see Appendix C) would usually apply.

## **Overcrowding**

Where a household is statutorily overcrowded (as defined in Part X of the Housing Act 1985), a household will be placed in Band A.

Where an 'overcrowding and space' category one hazard is identified by an Environmental Health Officer under the Housing Act 2004 or a household lacks two or more bedrooms and there is no action that can be taken to remedy the overcrowding, the applicant will be placed in Band 'B'.

Applicants will be placed in Band 'C' if they lack one bedroom.

The table below sets out the minimum standards that apply.

**Table 2: The Bedroom Standard**

An adult couple	1 bedroom
A person over 21	1 bedroom
Two young persons 10-20 years of the same sex	1 bedroom
One child under 10 years and one young person under 20 of the same sex	1 bedroom
One or two children under 10 years (not necessarily of the same sex)	1 bedroom
Any unpaired young persons 10-20 years of unpaired children under 10	1 bedroom

Please note that if there is a second reception room it will generally be deemed to be available for use as a bedroom.

### **Reviews of the Housing Register**

The Council will carry out bi-annual reviews of applicants on the Housing Register. Applicants are required to notify the Council of any change in circumstances that might affect their application. If an applicant's circumstances change they may be moved up or down a band depending on their need.

Applicants will be removed from the Register if they fail to re-register (send back the return slip or application form if required) within four weeks of receipt of a review letter, unless exceptional circumstances are demonstrated.

Applications will also be reviewed before any offer of accommodation is made. If circumstances are found to have changed from those initially declared, the offer will be reviewed and may be withdrawn.

Section 171 of the 1996 Act makes it an offence to knowingly withhold information that this authority reasonably requires to assess an application, or to knowingly or recklessly provide false information. The Council will take robust action against anyone who gains a tenancy in such circumstances. This may result in a substantial fine and/or the loss of the home.

The Data Protection Act 1988 is designed to protect personal data about living individuals (Data Subjects). The Act also places obligations on those organisations that process personal data (Data Controllers). As a Data Controller, the Council and its partners on the Housing Register are committed to complying with this legislation

by applying the Principles of Good Information Handling across all services related to Homemove.

### **Priority Date**

The principle of the scheme is that no one should overtake existing applicants in a Band.

#### Moving up a Band:

If an applicant moves up a Band their priority date will be as follows:

- Overcrowding due to the birth of a child: the date will be taken from the child's date of birth.
- Transfer Priorities: the date the information is received from housing management.
- For Environmental Health Reasons: the date the decision is received from the Environmental Health Officer.
- Medical reasons: the date of medical assessment made by the Council.
- Homeless Households: the date duty was accepted by the Council.
- All other applicants: the date the application is received.

#### Moving down a Band:

If an applicant moves down a Band, then their priority date will revert to the date that applied when the applicant was previously in that Band, or any earlier date in a higher Band.

## **7. Community Contribution Policy**

The aim of the community contribution policy is to give additional priority to applicants who can demonstrate a commitment and contribution to the community and district's economic growth as working households or through voluntary work or training. Community contribution will be awarded separately to an applicant's existing priority and does not increase applicants' banding. It will not operate as a standalone banding criterion.

### **How does it work?**

A percentage of available lets up to a maximum of 20% per year will be made available to applicants able to demonstrate a 'community contribution'. Applicants must be able to demonstrate this at the point of application and at the point of offer. Properties will be advertised through Homemove with preference given to applicants with a proven and accepted Community Contribution. The shortlist will be run in the usual way, with the successful applicant being in the highest band, waited longest, with a Community Contribution.

### **Definition of community contribution**

1. Households where at least one adult household member is in 'established' employment within the Wealden district or an adjoining district or borough to Wealden and has been employed for a continuous period of at least 12 months with a combined household income of less than £30,500
2. Applicants undertaking full time training for a nationally recognised qualification such as NVQ, BTEC or Diploma; an Apprenticeship or work-place based training for a minimum of 16 hours per week. Training must be for a duration of at least six months and the training must already have commenced. Evidence will be required from the educational institution or work placement employer.
3. Transfer applicants with a positive tenancy history defined as a clear rent account for at least three years, no reports of anti-social behaviour or nuisance *and* making a positive contribution to the local community by involvement in residents groups or similar community-based interests.
4. Applicants who can demonstrate a contribution to the local community such as voluntary work for a not for profit or community-based organisation or charity. This could be specific to an area or estate or could be voluntary work anywhere in the Wealden area. Volunteers must have been volunteering on a **regular** basis for a **continuous and sustained** period of at least **three years** up to the point of application and the same at point of offer.

Verification will be sought at point of application as well as point of offer under the same terms. Applicants must provide payslips, P60, bank statements or a verifying letter on headed paper from their employer or sponsor in order to qualify.

## **8. Bidding, shortlisting and lettings of homes**

### **Advertising**

The Council advertises all available Council and Registered Provider homes online at [www.homemove.org.uk](http://www.homemove.org.uk). Applicants who are registered for housing are provided with a unique reference number which allows them to log-in securely and bid for available homes. Applicants who are considered vulnerable and who do not have internet access are assisted to bid by staff and/or are provided with a personalised

property list called My Homemove, which lists the properties available that applicants may be eligible to bid for.

Full details of how to bid are set out in the Scheme User Guide which is sent out to all new applicants, or available on the internet at [www.homemove.org.uk](http://www.homemove.org.uk). The Council will advertise all properties as being for Transfer applicants or housing applicants or both and set the eligibility criteria for the property, such as:

- The minimum and maximum number of persons in the household
- If there are age restrictions for applicants e.g. for sheltered accommodation.
- If properties are restricted for example, for transfers only or those with a 'community contribution' or local connection to a parish or if a local lettings plan exists.
- If pets are allowed.
- Whether it is sheltered housing.
- Who owns the property, whether Council or Housing Association.
- The weekly rent, including any other charges.
- The mobility group, if applicable.

Certain properties will have a mobility classification as below and priority will be given to those with a matching need. Properties will also be advertised with notes where the potential for adaptation or further adaptation exists:

1. Suitable for a wheelchair user indoor and outdoors.
2. Suitable for people who cannot manage steps or stairs and may use a wheelchair some of the time.
3. Suitable for people who are independent but can only manage one or two steps.

In cases where households have been accepted as homeless under the 1996 Act and have been awarded the relevant Band, a household may bid for accommodation that falls outside of the above criteria if it has been assessed that the property is reasonable for the household's needs. The offer will be regarded as discharging the Council's duty under the 1996 Act.

In addition:

- Where there is overriding medical need to support the request the Council will allocate households up to one additional bedroom over the standards set above.

- No applicants can bid for properties that would not be a suitable size for the household size.
- Where a household is moving to smaller accommodation, they may be entitled to assistance under the Transfer Incentive Scheme.
- Supported housing will normally be allocated outside of Homemove to applicants that have support needs that have been assessed and approved by the Council and support providers.
- Offers of temporary accommodation made to homeless households will be allocated outside of Homemove.

### **Sheltered Housing and bungalows**

The Council and Registered Providers have a variety of sheltered accommodation specifically for older people aged 60 years or over (there are a small number of sheltered schemes that will accept applications from people aged 55 and over). Bungalows will also usually be advertised for applicants over the age of 60 or for those in need of this type of accommodation on medical grounds. Where it has been agreed with Housing Management, bids for sheltered schemes may be considered from applicants with mobility needs under the age of 60.

Sheltered housing is for older people who are capable of living independently with some limited help in the home. To help uphold the Council's aim of providing sustainable communities, Wealden District Council gives preference to older applicants who express a wish for, and demonstrate the ability to benefit from, the services available in sheltered accommodation.

Where an applicant does not express an interest in sheltered accommodation, or is considered unable to live independently, the Council reserves the right not to make an offer where it reasonably believes that to do so would have an adverse effect on the health, welfare and/or safety of any person including the applicant.

Small pets in sheltered accommodation are considered on a case by case basis, where an applicant has successfully bid on ground floor accommodation. Permission must be sought from the Sheltered Housing Team Leader before bringing pets to sheltered accommodation and are subject to certain conditions.

### **How to bid**

Applicants can bid online at [www.homemove.org.uk](http://www.homemove.org.uk), by phone, text, coupon or with help from staff. Full details of how to bid are set out in the Scheme User Guide,

which will be sent out to all new applicants and is available on the website [www.homemove.org.uk](http://www.homemove.org.uk).

Applicants with support needs and those who have difficulty with written English will be supported by the Housing Options Team, an appointed support provider or a translator.

All bids for a property are checked against the eligibility rules, for example any age restrictions or size of property. Ineligible bids are excluded from consideration. We will provide advice and support to applicants who regularly bid for properties they are not eligible for.

Applicants can bid for up to three properties they are eligible for per fortnight.

### **How bids are shortlisted**

All eligible bids for each property are placed in priority order. Priority is decided firstly by Band, secondly by priority date within the Band, and finally by random selection if there are two applicants in the same band with the same priority date. For properties in the rural parishes, priority is decided firstly by Band (A to C only), secondly by priority date within the Band, thirdly by local connection to the parish (please see Appendix A for full details of the Parish Lettings Policy). For properties advertised with preference given to applicants with a Community Contribution, priority is decided firstly by Band, secondly by priority date within the Band, thirdly by Community Contribution status.

Where a property has been advertised to give preference to a mobility group, bids from these applicants will be prioritised in Band order above bids from members who are not in that mobility group.

The Council's intention is to extend the benefits of choice based letting to all applicants. As explained above under the heading 'Advertising' certain properties will be advertised subject to certain restrictions whilst other properties (referred to as 'general needs accommodation') will not be subject to any such restrictions.

Applicants who have particular housing needs due to medical needs or other circumstances can bid for general needs accommodation, however, the Council reserves the right not to make an offer where it reasonably believes that to do so would have an adverse effect on the health, welfare and/or safety of any person including the applicant, or where other, more suitable accommodation may become available, for example where adaptations would be required to a house and ground floor accommodation would be more suitable.

Every bid will be assigned a random number when the bid is made. This number is used to resolve a tie, the highest number getting the priority. If there are no eligible bidders for a property, the Housing Options Team may decide to make a direct allocation or re-advertise the property.



If the property is owned by a Registered Provider, the prioritised list will be referred to the landlord for offer.

To minimise delays the landlord may arrange multiple viewings for up to three applicant households per property. Applicants will be required to bring proof of identity and any other relevant documentation that has not already been verified to the viewing. For general needs Council housing the Housing Options Team will:

- Arrange accompanied viewings, advise on any non-essential repairs to be completed after the tenancy start date and give a target date for the completion of these repairs.
- Offer the applicant the option to accept and invite to sign for the tenancy or agree a decision within 24 hours.
- If the applicant chooses to refuse, the Allocations Officer will note the reasons for the refusal and the next applicant is selected for an offer.
- Applicants who do not provide proof of identity or other relevant requested documentation at the viewing will be given 24 hours to provide proof at a Council office prior to signing for the tenancy.

If a property is considered to be a sensitive let, any issues surrounding this will be discussed with the incoming tenant prior to a tenancy being granted, where appropriate.

## **9. Local Lettings Plans**

Offers will normally be made to applicants at the top of the shortlist. In very exceptional circumstances we may need to reject an applicant on the shortlist for a particular property to ensure that we meet the following objectives:

### **To ensure that communities are as balanced as possible**

We may adopt Local Lettings Plans for specific areas. These plans will need to be agreed by stakeholders and will consider the problems that need addressing, backed up by evidence. Properties subject to Local Lettings Plans will be clearly advertised and priority will be given to those that meet the agreed criteria.

The national and regional housing agendas are encouraging new housing schemes to be mixed tenure, catering for a range of households with varying needs and aspirations. Where there are such developments in Wealden, properties may be made available to households that would not otherwise have the opportunity to access affordable housing. This is to ensure the developments cater for a variety of residents as opposed to concentrations of households with particular support needs.

In areas of the district where there are higher than average concentrations of deprivation or vulnerable households with high support needs there may be instances where the Council will offer housing specifically to working households or those with limited housing need. Through this process lettings can contribute toward balanced, sustainable communities, with a positive impact on education, local businesses, and health.

We will work with RPs and Housing Management teams to develop local letting policies for new developments and disadvantaged areas if appropriate. Local policies will aim to widen housing choices for local people and ensure good housing contributes to regeneration and renewal. These policies will be carefully considered to ensure that in correcting an imbalance in one area they do not create another.

A local lettings plan is an agreement between the Council and local tenants and residents that restricts lettings in the area to certain households. This is done to tackle a specific issue or problem that has been identified locally at either block, street, estate or neighbourhood level.

Where a local lettings policy is in place, the property advert will outline how preference may be given.

### **Rural properties**

In the rural parishes in Wealden priority will be given to applicants in the highest Band with a proven local connection to the parish where the vacancy has occurred. Please see Appendix A for an explanation of the Council's Parish Lettings Policy.

### **To ensure that allocations are sensitively made**

In exceptional cases, for housing management reasons, we may not offer to the person at the top of the shortlist. Certain properties are also subject to maximum and minimum age restrictions and these will be clearly labelled in the property advert.

### **To make best use of the Council's stock and to reduce under occupation**

From time to time a property may be advertised for those who are releasing larger Council accommodation or reserved for those who need to move urgently because the Council is undertaking work on the property.

### **To ensure properties are let quickly**

This is important to minimise rent loss and empty property turn around time. Applicants must be available and able to take up an offer of accommodation although applicants can choose not to accept any offer made. If an applicant is being made an offer of accommodation as a discharge of homeless duty the applicant should seek advice on the consequences of refusing an offer.

## **10. Assisted bids and Refusals**

Assisted bids will be placed by staff for applicants in the following categories of Band A or B from the time their application moves into that band:-

- Applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness within the meaning of the 1996 Act but have yet to make an application for assistance and whose housing needs are assessed by the Council to be sufficiently severe to justify urgent priority.
- Homeless households owed a duty under s.193 of the 1996 Act by the Council and who have been provided with emergency accommodation
- Households who are owed a duty under s.193 or 195 of the 1996 Act, and have a local connection to Wealden within the meaning of Pt VII of the 1996 Act **and** who are accommodated by the Council in self contained temporary accommodation or are making their own temporary arrangements.

If a successful bid is placed on the applicant's behalf that is considered a suitable and reasonable offer, and the applicant refuses the offer, the Council's duty to the applicant may be discharged or the applicant's banding reduced to Band D for six months.

There is a six-week time limit for bidding from the date the application is placed into Band A or B, for the following categories of Band 'A' and 'B' applicants and assisted bids will simultaneously be placed on behalf of these applicants: -

- Transfer applicants needing permanent or temporary decant where the property is imminently required for major repair or redevelopment.
- Ex-tenants returning from institutions e.g. rehabilitation where a commitment has been made in order to secure the relinquishment of a Council or RP tenancy on entering the institution.
- Successors and non-statutory successors – approved by the Housing Services Manager for an offer of suitable accommodation.
- High priority transfers
- Under-occupiers who have succeeded to the tenancy where the Council has grounds for seeking possession by offering suitable alternative accommodation.

If an applicant in the above categories fails to bid for suitable properties within the six-week period and no successful assisted bids have been placed, their case will be reviewed. After the review a decision will be made as to whether or not to extend the bidding period, reduce priority to Band D or original band, make further assisted bids on the applicant's behalf or offer a direct letting. In these circumstances the Council will make one offer only which if refused, the application will be placed in Band D for six months.

## **Direct Lettings**

The Council needs to retain some flexibility to deal with exceptional circumstances. At the discretion of the Head of Housing, the Council may allocate properties directly. Any property let direct will generally not be advertised through Homemove. The Council will make one reasonable offer to the applicant in these circumstances. If refused the application will be moved to Band D.

## **Refusals**

Where an applicant has been made a direct let or a successful bid made on their behalf by the Council, the Council will make one reasonable offer which as far as possible matches the size and type of property the applicant is eligible for and in an area of choice, where possible, for the household.

The applicant will be expected to view, accept and move into the property promptly. If the applicant refuses the offer and is owed the main homelessness duty, no further offer will be made and the Council will consider that its duty will have been discharged. Applicants will then be placed into Band D or their original band.

Band A or B applicants not owed the full housing duty but who have been made an offer under prevention of homelessness measures may also have their application moved to Band D, or their original band, for six months if one offer is refused.

Other applicants who have refused three offers of accommodation will have their application moved to Band D for six months.

If the applicant refuses the offer, they will be requested to give their reasons for refusing and no further offer will normally be made. Failure to respond to an offer within four days of the date of the offer, may be considered a refusal.

The applicant can request a review of the decision not to make a further offer. The property will not be held empty while the refusal is reviewed but will be let to another applicant.

Where such an offer is made pursuant to a duty arising under s.193 or 195 of the 1996 Act and the offer is refused, the Council will normally regard itself as discharged from that duty.

Applicants placed into temporary accommodation by Wealden District Council may be required to pay back all temporary accommodation and storage costs incurred as a result of refusing a suitable offer by the Council.

If the offer is to a tenant, employee or someone without succession rights, the Housing Services Team Leader will review the case. If there is a clear mismatch, e.g. where applicant or property details were incorrect, the offer will be withdrawn and the applicant notified. If the offer was found to be a reasonable one, the Housing Options and Strategy Manager will advise the applicant of the reasons for this finding and of the effect that this decision has on their application. They will also

advise the applicant of their right to request a review of the decision and the timescales that this needs to be within.

If the offer is to a homeless household the Housing Options Team Leader will review the case and will take the necessary follow-up action.

If the property was found not to be suitable on review, a further offer may be made by a direct let.

### **Feedback on Let Properties**

All properties let are listed in at [www.homemove.org](http://www.homemove.org) showing the number of bidders for each property and the Band and priority date of the successful applicant.

### **Joint tenancies**

The Council will grant a joint tenancy to partners applying together for housing in most circumstances. A joint tenancy remains in joint names until one or both joint tenants terminate the tenancy. For further advice please contact your Housing Officer or seek independent legal advice.

## **11. Other Housing Options**

Due to the pressures on social housing across the district applicants will receive advice and information about a range of housing options such as low-cost home ownership schemes, accommodation outside of the district and suitable private sector rented accommodation.

The Council currently operates:

- **The Transfer Incentive Scheme** - financial assistance offered to Council tenants giving up family sized accommodation.
- **The Wealden Letstart Scheme** - a paper 'bond' or cash loan to assist people to secure accommodation in the private rented sector.
- **East Sussex Discretionary Support Scheme** – financial assistance for rent in advance payments for non-priority homeless households
- **Mutual Exchange** - to assist existing social housing tenants to swap their property with other tenants within and outside of the Wealden district.

## **12. Appeals and Reviews**

This section sets out the procedure for reviewing or appealing the following decisions:-

1. Exclusions from the Housing Register to exclude an applicant or to remove someone from the Housing Register other than at his or her request.
2. That an applicant is ineligible for an offer.
3. Other decisions relating to the Homemove Scheme, including banding decisions and priority dates.
4. Where a priority has been removed
5. Where a Direct Let has been offered and / or refused.

An officer senior to the officer making the original decision (and who was not involved in making the decision) will carry out these reviews.

### **Procedure**

- A request for a review must be made within 21 days from the day on which the applicant is notified of the Council's decision and the reasons for it. The Council has discretion to extend the time limit if it considers this would be reasonable.
- A request should be in writing (help is available at Citizens Advice Bureaux and other agencies). The applicant should provide relevant new information e.g. NTQ, medical information where appropriate.
- The reviewing officer will carry out an investigation, and, if further information is needed, invite the applicant to write or, if unable to do this, make oral representation. The applicant may also appoint someone on his/her behalf to do this.
- If the reviewing officer finds that the officer who took the decision did not take relevant information into account, they will refer the file back to that officer for reconsideration or overturn the decision.
- The officer will notify the applicant of the decision and the reasons for it within eight weeks of the request for a review. There is no right to request a review of the decision unless the applicant's circumstances change.

NOTE: None of the above affects any right you may have under the Housing Act 1996 or any other legislation to request that the Council reviews a decision.

## Appendix A: Parish Lettings Policy

### **Why do we have this policy?**

The Parish Lettings Policy aims to sustain and support rural communities by ensuring that housing in a rural parish is allocated to those applicants who have a local connection with that parish. The local connection is with the parish as a whole not individual villages or settlements within the parish.

### **Where does it apply?**

The Parish Lettings Policy applies to all parishes in Wealden. It does not apply to lettings in Hailsham, Polegate, Uckfield or Crowborough.

### **What types of properties does it apply to?**

This policy applies to all new and existing homes in the parishes to which this Parish Lettings Policy applies except for sheltered accommodation, four bedroomed homes and disabled adapted homes.

*The application of this Parish Lettings Policy may be modified where, for example, social housing is built on what is called a 'rural exception site'. The letting of such properties will be controlled by very specific criteria (usually set out in a S.106 Planning Agreement) relating to enabling access to affordable housing for people with a local connection to a particular parish. This means that lettings of these homes will be subject to the conditions set out in the S.106 agreement. The shortlist will be considered from Bands A to D inclusive, before considering neighbouring rural parishes Bands A to D, then the Wealden District.*

Also, there are certain affordable housing developments in respect of which the Council has the right to make nominations or make allocations and so far as these sites are concerned this policy will apply as follows: -

- (a) On sites of 10 or less affordable housing units this Parish Lettings Policy will apply to the initial and subsequent letting of all of the affordable housing units made available to the Council.
- (b) On sites of 11 or more affordable housing units this Parish Lettings Policy will apply to the initial and subsequent letting of a percentage (to be determined on a site by site basis) of the affordable housing units made available to the Council. The remainder of the affordable housing units made available to the Council will be allocated in accordance with the Council's allocations scheme to meet district-wide need.

The percentage of affordable housing units made subject to this Parish Lettings Policy will be determined on a site by site basis having regard to the local housing need in a particular parish. By way of example only, in respect of a small site in a rural parish with a high housing need, it may be appropriate to provide that 50% of the affordable housing units shall be subject to terms of this Policy.

### **How does the Parish Lettings Policy work?**

When accommodation is allocated in a rural parish the Parish Lettings Policy will normally apply and you will need to demonstrate that you have a local connection with the parish. How you demonstrate a 'local connection' is explained below.

### **How to demonstrate a local connection to a parish**

In order to be considered as having a local connection to a particular parish, applicants must complete a Local Connection form at the time of applying for housing. This form is part of the Housing Application form. Additional forms can be requested from the Council offices or downloaded at [www.wealden.gov.uk](http://www.wealden.gov.uk). If an applicant believes they have a local connection to more than one parish, they must complete a separate Local Connection form for each parish they consider they have a connection to.

### **Definition of local connection**

For the purposes of the Council's Parish Lettings Policy, a local connection to the Parish is defined as meeting *one* of the following criteria:-

1. People in need of separate affordable accommodation who currently live in the parish and have normally done so for a continuous period of at least **five** years.
2. People with close adult relatives (over the age of 18), generally defined as parents and adult children or siblings who live in the parish and normally have done so continuously for a period of at least **ten** years.
3. People who have lived in the parish for **five** years out of the last **ten** years and who had to move away from the parish because of a lack of affordable housing.
4. People who have 'established' employment within the parish, or have a genuine offer of established employment within the parish, which provides an important service to the local community and who need to live locally to carry out their duties.



5. Exceptional circumstances - where failure to reside in the parish would cause hardship to the applicant or others (to be agreed by the Housing Options and Strategy Manager on a case by case basis)

For the purposes of the Parish Lettings Policy, 'established employment' means: -

- A person employed on a permanent full time basis (37 hours) by an employer whose business or undertaking is located within the parish; or
- A person employed on a permanent part time basis where the hours worked are not less than 16 hours per week by an employer whose business or undertaking is located within the parish; or
- A person carrying out work on a self employed basis equivalent to or averaging not less than 16 hours per week where that person's business or undertaking is based within the parish.

*Please note parish local connection is defined as meeting one of the above criteria. There is no additional weight given to applicants with a "stronger" local connection than the criteria above or by meeting more than one criterion.*

### **How will rural homes be allocated under Homemove?**

#### Stage 1 - application

For an applicant's local connection to a parish to be considered when bids are received, a local connection form must have been submitted and verified by the Council before a bid is made. It is the applicant's responsibility to inform the Council of a local connection using the Local Connection form.

When a Council or Housing Association property becomes vacant in any of the rural parishes, the property will be advertised under the Homemove scheme, along with all other available homes. Applicants can 'bid' for the property if it is suitable for their needs.

#### Stage 2 – short listing

When the Council receives the shortlist of bidders, priority will be given to bidders in the highest Band, who have been registered the longest time and have a proven local connection to that parish. .

- 1) Bids will be considered from Bands A to C where the applicant has a proven local connection to the parish.
- 2) If no applicants through Bands A, B and C have a local connection to the parish, we will consider all applicants through Bands A, B and C who have a local connection to an adjoining *parish*.

- 3) If no applicants through Bands A, B and C have local connection to the parish or an adjoining parish, the property will be allocated to the applicant in the highest band with a local connection to the District.

Band D applicants will only be considered if no bids have been received from Band A, B or C applicants. In the event only Band D bids have been received, we will allocate the property in the following order.

- 4) Bids will be considered from Band D where the applicant has a proven local connection to the parish.
- 5) If no applicant in Band D who has a local connection to the parish, we will consider all applicants in Band D who have a local connection to an adjoining parish.
- 6) If no applicants in Band D who have local connection to the parish or adjoining parish, the property will be allocated to a Band D applicant with a local connection to the District

#### Stage 3 – offer

If the Council is satisfied that the applicant has a local connection to the parish, the offer will go ahead. If a local connection is not in place, the short-listing process will start again from Stage 2.