

Appendix 3

RESULTS OF A CONSULTATION ON A REVISED HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY FOR THE BOROUGH OF SPELTHORNE

1. Background

- 1.1 All local housing authorities are required to have a housing allocations policy in place that shows how we prioritise applications for social housing and the procedures to be followed in allocating these homes.
- 1.2 Elmbridge and Spelthorne Borough Councils currently have a common housing allocations policy, along with PA Housing and A2Dominion. They operate a choice-based lettings scheme, known as SEARCH Moves, through which households can apply for social housing across North Surrey and be offered social housing.
- 1.3 The four organisations are proposing to make changes following the end of the current partnership arrangements, with each partner having its own separate Allocation Policy. This would amend the way in which applications for housing are prioritised locally and eliminate cross partner lettings, which only form a small percentage of overall lettings.
- 1.4 The Search Moves group recognises that there is still merit in working as a partnership, given the possibility of sharing costs around the IT system and the website.
- 1.5 Although the law requires local authorities to consult with providers of social housing in their area prior to making changes to their housing allocation policies, it was felt important to extend this consultation to those on the Spelthorne Housing Register and other stakeholders.

2. Consultation - method, scope & response

Consultation method

- 2.1 A questionnaire was developed to collect views on the proposed changes. The questionnaire was available on the Search Moves website and the Spelthorne Council website, with a link being provided to take part in the survey. In addition notifications of the consultation were posted on the Council's Facebook page and on Twitter.

The consultation ran from Monday 22nd May 2017 to Friday 30th June 2017.

Consultation scope

- 2.2 The survey set out two main changes and sought views from respondents on them. Broadly these included whether responders were happy to:
 - agree to cease cross partner lettings
 - agree to a reduced priority for 'Transfer' tenants
- 2.3 An additional question was included in the consultation to consider respondents views on the equality of the proposed changes on particular groups of people.

2.4 The following steps were taken to encourage interested parties to take part in the survey.

- **Those currently on the Housing Register**

The 1900 applicants currently on the Housing Register at Spelthorne were given the opportunity to take part in the survey, via the Search Moves website.

- **Residents of Spelthorne**

The Council was keen to extend the consultation beyond housing applicants to include local residents more generally. Their participation was sought by providing details of the consultation process and link to the survey on the Council's main website. The Council issued a press release promoting the consultation as well as regular reminders on Facebook and twitter.

- **Partner organisations**

All social landlords with rented stock within Spelthorne, including existing members of the Partnership, were e-mailed directly and invited to take part in the online survey.

Consultation response

2.3 There were 65 responses received. In the main, the results are reported here in percentage terms and relate to the overall response.

2.4 The responses break down as follows:

- 98% (64) responses received on behalf of households and 2% (1) received back from partner organisations.
- 42% of household responses indicated that they had a housing application in place with the SEARCH Moves scheme and 55% did not, with 3% not knowing
- Of those with a housing application, 28% (18) indicated that their application was with Spelthorne BC, 12% (8) with A2Dominion and 2% (1) being registered with Elmbridge BC.
- 89% of households responding were resident in Spelthorne, 9% elsewhere and 2% did not know.

3. Survey Results

3.1 In response to the question as to whether respondents agreed with the proposal to cease cross partner lettings and for all future lettings to be made only to those on the Housing Register, 71% agreed with the proposal, 26% disagreed and 3% did not know.

3.2 69% of respondents agreed that we should reduce priority for most 'Transfer' tenants. 25% disagreed and 6% did not know.

3.2 A question was also posed to help inform the equality impact assessment and flag up any potential negative impacts that had not been previously considered or identified when formulating the changes to the Allocation Policy

The following question was asked.

“Do you think any of the proposed changes will have a negative impact on any particular group of people, e.g. due to their age, gender, disability, race, relationship status, religion, sexuality and pregnancy and maternity?”

- 3.2 57% of respondents answered “no”, 28% said “yes” and 15% answered “don’t know”.
- 3.3 With particular reference to equality, two comments were made with regard to applicants who are victims of domestic violence who may need to move out of the Spelthorne Borough, which could previously have been achieved through Cross Partner lettings, and how this would now be achieved.
- 3.4 There was one comment with regard to disabled applicants having preference for properties that already have disabled adaptations. (This is a procedure which is already followed with regard to adapted properties).

4. Additional Comments

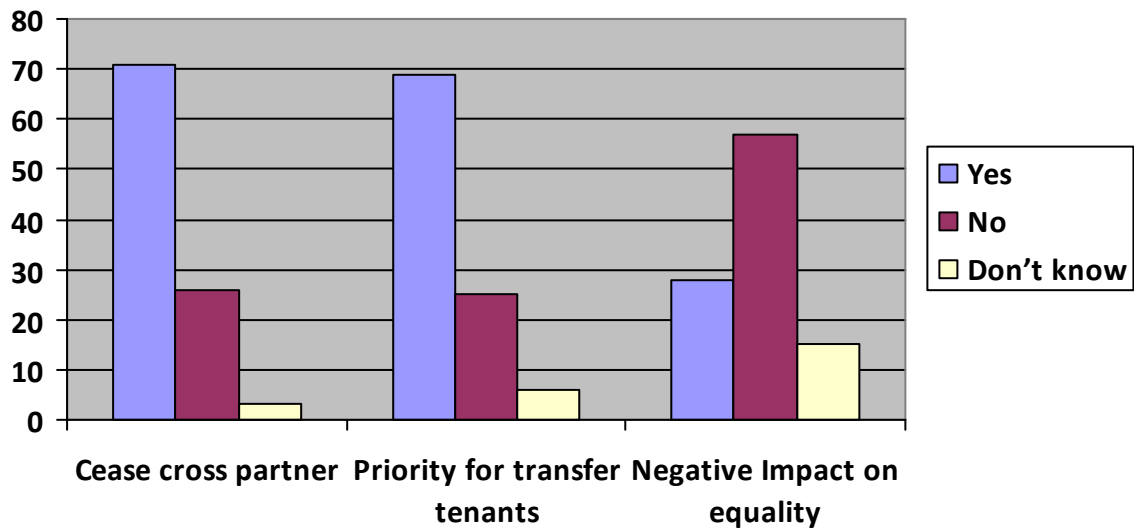
- 4.1 There was an invitation within the survey for responders to provide any additional comments and 14 took the opportunity to give their views. The feedback received covered a whole range of topics and the following summarises the most common themes:
- Two responders expressed support for priority to be given to those in work and those who are considered to be “net contributors”, over those who they considered to be dependent on benefits and not working
 - Two responders felt that more consideration should be given to long term privately renting applicants, both in terms of cost and the ability to “set roots” in the community without the worry of being evicted.
 - One responder said that Homeseekers (someone not already a social housing tenant) should get priority over transfer tenants, as they already had a social housing tenancy.
 - Four responders mentioned the fairness of the CBL system, but conversely one said that everyone should have a fair chance, whether a social housing tenant or not. It was also felt that priority should be given to those applicants who live within the Borough of Spelthorne.

Date: July 2017

Appendix 1 - The Proposed Changes – Summary of all responses

Question	Yes	No	Don't Know	Approval Rating	Household	Organisation	Application Partner
1. Do you agree with the proposal for all cross partner lettings to cease and for all future lettings to Spelthorne properties to be made to those on Spelthorne's housing register only?	71%	26%	3%	45%			
2. Do you agree with the proposal to adopt reduced priority for most transfer tenants?	69%	25%	6%	44%			
3. Do you think any of the proposed changes will have a negative impact on a particular group of people due to their age, gender, disability race, relationship status, religion, sexuality, pregnancy / maternity?	28%	57%	15%	19%			
5. Are you replying on behalf of an organisation or as a household?					98%	2%	
7. Do you have an application for rehousing with the SEARCH Moves Choice Based Lettings scheme?	42%	55%	3%				
8. Who is your housing application with?							SBC – 28% A2D – 12% ELM – 2%
9. Do you currently live in the Borough of Spelthorne?	89%	9%	2%				
10. Are you a current social housing tenant? By this we mean a tenant of a housing association or Council landlord.	23%	77%					

The table shows that for each proposed change, there were more respondents in agreement with the proposal than who disagreed. In all cases, over 50% of the respondents agreed with the proposed changes.



The table below shows that more than 50% of responders do not have a Search Moves application, that almost 90% of responders live in the borough of Spelthorne and that the vast majority of responders are not currently social housing tenants.

