

## **Allocations Policy**

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1.1 Mole Valley Housing Association (MVHA) is committed to ensuring that its homes are allocated in a fair and equitable way, following the agreed policy, ensuring that all residents have equal access to its housing.
- 1.1.2 MVHA will have regard for the Housing Corporation's requirements in respect of lettings and nominations. The Housing Corporation Regulatory Circular 02/03 – Local Authority Nominations, has therefore been considered in the preparation of this policy.
- 1.1.3 MVHA will work in partnership with Mole Valley District Council to allocate the Association's empty homes. Mole Valley District Council will operate the Housing Register for the district, including MVHA tenants who wish to transfer to alternative accommodation.
- 1.1.4 The policy relates to the letting of permanent or probationary (introductory) tenancies only.

### **2. Background and Information**

#### **2.1 Mole Valley District Council's Housing Register**

- 2.1.1 MVHA agreed in principle at its September 2006 meeting last year to work with Mole Valley District Council in respect of allocations and to fully utilise the Council's Housing Register.
- 2.1.2 Anyone may apply to join the Housing Register provided they are at least 16 years old and are applying for a property to use as their only or principal residence. The Housing Register is open to all applicants, including those residing outside the Mole Valley district. Due to the pressure on social housing in the area, those applicants that are homeowners or who reside outside the district will not normally be given priority for housing unless they qualify for some local connection schemes.
- 2.1.3 Mole Valley District Council introduced a new Allocations Scheme in October 2004 to comply with Government guidance and legislation. The Allocations Scheme was introduced following a lengthy public consultation exercise and direct consultation with Mole Valley Tenants Action Group (MVTAG). The Allocations Scheme is a points based scheme.
- 2.1.4 Amongst many of the changes introduced to the Housing Register, a "quota" system was put in place to ensure that communities are balanced and sustainable and that access to housing is fair and

equitable. The system is reviewed on an annual basis and the quota amended accordingly.

### 2.1.5 The Quota system - General Needs Housing

1 bedroomed accommodation:

- Transfers 20% (25%)
- Applicants 60% (65%)
- Homeless 15% ( 5%)
- Special circumstances 5% ( 5%)

2 or more bedroomed accommodation:

- Transfers 20% (35%)
- Applicants 40% (50%)
- Homeless 35% (10%)
- Special circumstances 5% ( 5%)

The figures in brackets ( ) indicate the proposed quotas from July 2007 to July 2008, to be considered by Mole Valley District Council in July 2007.

2.1.6 A similar quota system is not in place for the allocation of sheltered housing units. Following the introduction of Supporting People and Mole Valley District Council's inspection in 2006, residents applying for sheltered housing must now have some level of "support" need. A new assessment criterion is currently being considered.

There are six levels of support criteria:

- |         |   |  |
|---------|---|--|
| Level 1 | * | Applicant with a housing need  |
|         | * | no identified support needs.   |
| Level 2 | * | Applicant needs the support provided by sheltered accommodation for peace of mind. |
| Level 3 | * | As level 2 and/or  |
|         | * | has minor health issues that require some occasional support and/or                |
|         | * | applicant occasionally requires practical assistance.                              |
| Level 4 | * | As level 2 and/or  |
|         | * | is aged 80 + and/or  |
|         | * | has significant health problems, regularly requiring practical assistance and/or   |
|         | * | a meals service is beneficial for the applicant's welfare and/or                   |

	*	a care package is in place for less than 5 visits a week.
Level 5	*	As level 2 and/or
	*	is aged 90+ and/or
	*	has major health issues requiring frequent support and/or
	*	Applicant has mobility problems requiring assistance and/or monitoring and/or
	*	a meals service is required and/or
	*	a care package consists of 5 or more visits a week
Level 6	*	Applicant has physical care needs greater than can be met by the provision of a care package and/or
	*	Applicant has a mental health condition and a move to alternative accommodation is likely to be detrimental to their health and/or
	*	Applicant has a mental health condition or lifestyle choice which is likely to have a detrimental effect on the quality of life on other sheltered housing residents

2.1.7 With MVHA's current housing provision, we can house applicants that meet levels 2,3,4 and 5.

2.1.8 Those applicants assessed as "Level 1" do not need to be housed in sheltered accommodation as there is no support need. However, they can be considered for general needs housing.

2.1.9 Those applicants assessed as "Level 6" cannot be housed by MVHA as MVHA does not currently provide accommodation to meet their needs.

#### 2.1.10 **Exclusions to the Housing Register**

Mole Valley District Council can exclude an applicant who is considered unsuitable to be a tenant if they are guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant of the authority at the time of their application.

Behaviour that may be regarded by the Council as unacceptable is:

- behaviour of the person concerned which would (if he were a secure tenant of the authority) entitle the authority to a possession order under section 84 of the Housing Act 1985 (c68) on any ground mentioned in Part 1 of Schedule 2 of that Act (other than Ground 8)

- behaviour of a member of his household that would (if he were a person residing with a secure tenant of the authority) entitle the authority to such a possession order.

This means that applicants with a history of rent arrears, violence or antisocial behaviour that was serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant will be excluded from the Mole Valley District Council's Housing Register.

Applicants who are excluded will be informed in writing and will be advised of their statutory right to request a review of this decision.

## 2.2 **Choice Based Lettings**

2.2.1 Mole Valley District Council is working in collaboration with Reigate & Banstead Borough Council and Tandridge District Council to introduce a "Choice Based Lettings" system. It is anticipated that this scheme will be introduced during 2008.

2.2.2 Choice Based Lettings will mean that residents have direct choice of the homes that they are considered for. The Government wishes to empower people to make decisions about where they live and to exercise their choice. The Council will advertise vacancies and provide details of the properties including physical condition, rent, service charge and neighbourhood information.

2.2.3 This Scheme means that applicants (including tenants) would put their names forward for consideration for a particular property, so long as that property is of a size that is adequate for the applicant. For example an applicant could not put their name forward for a 2 bedroomed house if the family consists of just the applicant and a partner, as this is against the Council's Allocations policy; however if there were a medical need for 2 bedroomed accommodation, this would be considered.

2.2.4 Mole Valley District Council will be carrying out consultation in due course with key stakeholders, including tenants and members of MVHA's staff in respect of the proposed Choice Based Lettings scheme.

2.2.5 The Allocations Officer must have regard for the support needs of the applicant when considering the allocation of sheltered units. Not all sheltered schemes are suitable for the same client group.

2.2.6 People can generally access some form of sheltered housing if they are disabled or if they are aged 55 years or above and have a housing support need.

## **2.3 Housing Need**

2.3.1 Mole Valley District Council has the statutory duty to address the issue of housing needs within its district. MVHA will work with Mole Valley District Council to deliver its Housing Strategy and to deliver the type of homes that are needed in the district. (This is often referred to as the “enabling” role). The Council also has the statutory duty to assist those residents who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

## **3. Allocation of Homes**

3.1 All applications for housing will continue to be made to the Council’s Housing Register. This will enable the Council to be fully aware of the needs within the district, ensuring equality of opportunity for all applicants by using a consistent approach to all allocations made. With the continuation of the quota system, issues such as sustainable communities will continue to be addressed. Other issues which arise from time to time, such as addressing low demand and stigmatised estates will be addressed in partnership between MVHA and the Council.

3.2.1 Applicants for housing in the district, including existing tenants, are used to registering with the Housing Needs team for housing and inclusion on the Housing Register; enabling this to continue will lead to less confusion from existing tenants than changing the current system.

3.2.2 MVHA will offer financial incentives and practical assistance to its existing residents that occupy homes that are too large for their needs, to “downsize” to smaller, more suitable accommodation.

3.3 The Council will have “nomination rights” to a minimum of 75% of the Association’s void properties during each year. The Association will retain direct access to 25% of its homes to address issues such as management moves, anti-social behaviour, regeneration etc. should these issues arise. (Management moves can be permanent or for an agreed temporary period).

3.4 By operating this way, it will not be necessary for Mole Valley Housing Association to maintain a separate Housing Register. MVHA’s Allocations Officer will, amongst other things, liaise with the Council’s Housing Needs team regarding nominations to the homes, carry out visits where appropriate to applicants and maintain a record of tenants needing a “management move”.

3.5 Applicants for housing searching on MVHA’s website will be able to access a Housing Register Application form and information about housing in the district. MVHA will also have Housing Register Application forms available from its reception.

## **4. New Developments**

4.1 With all new developments, the nominations agreement will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. However, it is normal practise

currently for the Council to receive 100% of all initial nominations for letting homes and then for this to reduce to 75% nomination rights for all further lettings. The Association will work closely with the Council to ensure that there is a local lettings plan in place for new developments to ensure that balanced communities are created and therefore sustainable.

**5. Nominations Rights Deed**

5.1 There will need to be a Nominations Rights Deed, similar to a Service Level Agreement, between MVHA and Mole Valley District Council to address all of the issues contained within this report as well as many more operational matters. The Nominations Rights Deed will ensure that the Council is fulfilling its statutory obligations. This Deed will be presented to Board Members once it is available.

**6. CORE**

6.1 CORE is the COntinuous REcording of lettings as required by the Government and the Housing Corporation. In 2004, the Housing Department began recording information on all new lettings. The information covers the client group, economic status, family size and ethnic origin amongst other things. This system will continue for all new lettings with Mole Valley Housing Association.

**7. Review and Monitoring of this Policy**

7.1 This policy should be reviewed in partnership between Officers and residents following the introduction of the council's Choice Based Lettings scheme and then bi-annually thereafter.