

# **Assisting supported applicants in shared housing into independent living and tackling the usage of temporary accommodation for homeless applicants.**

## **1. Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to seek approval from the Head of Strategic Housing for an operational change to redirect resources of up to 5 homes per year from Sussex Oakleaf (who no longer operate a supported housing service in Crawley), to Crawley Open House, a local hostel.

In return, the Council would be assisting Crawley Open House with the throughput of vacancies so that other homeless applicants who need shelter and with a local connection to Crawley are better placed to access the homeless hostel. This also includes residents who approach the Council for assistance and who are not eligible for emergency temporary accommodation.

## **2. Reason for report**

Crawley Open House (COH) is a day centre and hostel comprising of 24 bedsitting rooms, with shared kitchens, bathrooms and laundry facilities. Residents, who must be over the age of 18 and have a local connection to Crawley, are assisted with benefit claims, encouraged to manage their own finances, to seek employment and where appropriate to access help from outside agencies. COH operate on the principle that it is their duty to safeguard the health and safety of its residents and staff and as a result, whilst it does not have a formal admission process, there is a standard of behaviour that is expected of its residents.

COH is the only hostel providing accommodation and support in the borough and therefore demand for their services is high.

When residents of COH are ready they are supported into move on accommodation owned and managed by the charity. COH own and manage 3 move on houses accommodating up to 15 residents at any given time. However, from there when they are ready for independent living, tenants have to find their own accommodation which can prove difficult in the current climate. Being able to access settled and affordable accommodation is crucial to enable throughput and ensure a move on pathway exists for single homeless people in Crawley.

Currently the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme makes a provision to allow a number of properties to be made available via Direct Let to people requiring accommodation with floating support provided in the past by Sussex Oakleaf Housing Association (SOHA).

## **3. Driver for the minor amendments**

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into force in April 2018 and significantly changed the way in which local authorities deliver services to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. It shifted the focus towards early intervention and the prevention or relief of homelessness, and for local authorities, having clear housing pathways for people (especially single homeless people with support needs) is vital if the use and cost of nightly paid temporary accommodation is to be minimised.

Since the Housing Allocations Scheme was written, the scope of SOHA has changed in that they no longer provide individual accommodation services with support in the borough.

The Allocations Scheme currently allows up to 5 units per year of Council accommodation to be allocated to applicants who have been accepted onto the SOHA tenancy support service. As this

particular project no longer exists in its original form in the borough it is proposed that it be allocated to COH residents instead.

By diverting the direct lets to COH, the Council will greatly assist with increasing the throughput of vacancies at the hostel so that more homeless residents who approach the Council will be able to access the temporary accommodation.

The change to the scheme will also assist the Council to achieve more pathways for single homeless people (who may also be sleeping rough), without the need for expensive nightly paid temporary accommodation.

#### **4. Minor changes required**

It is proposed that the scheme is amended to remove the direct lets to SOHA who no longer require them and to redirect up to 5 properties per year to residents of COH who are ready for independent living as set out in the wording below

##### **6.10.1 Open House Move On Project (Direct Let)**

The Council may make up to five one bedroom properties (per year) available for allocation to applicants on the housing register who are 18 years or over and who:

- Are being supported and accommodated by Open House in their move on accommodation and;
- Are assessed by Open House as no longer requiring their support and who are ready for independent living

A Housing Needs Officer may make a direct let to an applicant after written confirmation is received by the Council from Open House that the applicant meets the above criteria.

By providing accommodation to applicants on the housing register under this section will free up vacancies at Crawley Open House (the hostel accommodation). These can be then be accessed by the Council's Housing Options Service for single homeless people within the borough who need the accommodation and support.

*Note: Open House is a temporary accommodation provider in the borough comprising of 24 bedsitting rooms and 15 move on spaces across three self-contained houses. Residents must be over 18 and have a local connection to the borough to be able to access this accommodation.*

#### **5. Recommendation**

The Head of Strategic Housing, following consultation with the cabinet member for Housing is invited in accordance with delegation 7.1.5 of the divisions Sub-Delegation Scheme to approve this minor amendment to wording to the Housing Allocation Scheme as set out in this report.

#### **6. Impact and Risk**

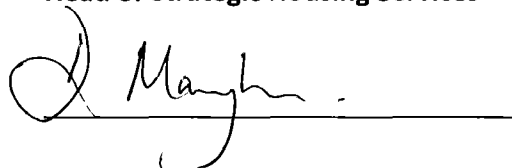
Because the change does not require any additional properties to be used for Direct Lets and that the allocation is being diverted from Sussex Oakleaf to COH it does not affect the qualification status or priority of any current housing register applicant or any person wishing to apply.

**Nick Hobbs**  
**Housing Needs Manager**  
**26<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

## 7. Decision

Following consultation on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2019 with the Cabinet Member for Housing and in accordance with Delegation 7.1.5 of the Divisions Sub-Delegation Scheme I agree with the recommendation and confirm that the minor amendments to the Housing Allocations Scheme set out in this briefing paper shall take effect on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

**Diana Maughan**  
**Head of Strategic Housing Services**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Maughan', is written over a horizontal line.

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2019