

Surrey Towers Local Lettings Policy (Andy Vincent, Corporate Head of Housing)

Synopsis of report:

Runnymede Borough Council's Housing Service is experiencing lower demand from housing applicants for properties at Surrey Towers.

In order to ensure all properties are let and the amount of rent lost through the properties being empty is kept to a minimum, a Local Lettings Policy for the block is being proposed.

The policy will be reviewed annually by Runnymede Borough Council's Housing Committee.

The detail of the Local Lettings Policy is included in Appendix A.

Recommendation(s):

That Housing Committee members

1. Approve the Local Lettings Policy set out in Appendix A.

1. Context and background of report

- 1.1 All social housing properties owned and managed by Runnymede Borough Council are let according to the authority's published Housing Allocations Policy.
- 1.2 All social housing within the borough where the Council has a nominations agreement are also let according to this policy.
- 1.3 The Housing Allocations Policy provides for the ability for Local Lettings Policies to be developed to alter the terms of the policy for a small group of properties provided that the overall intention of the policy and access to social housing for all residents is not altered.
- 1.4 Local Lettings Plans
 - 1.4.1 From time to time, the Council will adopt Local Lettings Plans (LLPs) for new or existing schemes, developments and/or areas of the borough where it wishes to deliver the broad objective of mixed, balanced sustainable communities.
 - 1.4.2 [Section 166A\(6\) of the Housing Act, 1996](#) enables local housing authorities to allocate particular accommodation to people of a particular description whether or not they fall within the Reasonable Preference categories. This section enables the Council to set aside homes or certain types of properties across the stock, for applicants who meet certain criteria.
 - 1.4.3 LLPs for developments and existing stock of over 50 units will be considered and approved by a Council Committee and an Equality Impact Assessment Screening will be compiled as part of the plan. LLPs for developments and

existing stock of up to 50 units will be agreed by the Service Manager and/or the Strategic Housing Manager, in conjunction with the Head of Housing.

- 1.5 Currently Runnymede Borough Council only has one Local Lettings Policy in place for its properties and this relates to the bungalows on Field View.

2. Surrey Towers Local Lettings Policy

- 2.1 Demand for accommodation in Surrey Towers is lower than the rest of the social housing stock owned by Runnymede Borough Council. The impact of this can be seen in the relet times of properties at Surrey Towers compared to relet times across the total of the housing stock.

- 2.2 Relet times in 2022/23

Surrey Towers	65 days	114 including major works.
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RBC Stock- average routine relet times	32 days	84 including major works.
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12 empty properties at Surrey Towers in 2022/23 or 12.37% of the block

169 units owned by RBC were let in 2022/23 of 2849 properties in total representing 5.93% of the total stock.

- 2.3 It is proposed to introduce a Local Lettings Policy to promote demand for the accommodation and improve its sustainability.
- 2.4 All properties within Surrey Towers will initially be offered through the Choice Based Lettings system within the Housing Allocation Policy or if there is no interest by a direct let to a homeless household.
- 2.5. If this is unsuccessful, it is proposed to enable applicants to benefit from an additional bedroom to their assessed housing need. This relates only to 3-bedroom properties within the block for which the wait is reasonably short in this borough, and therefore most applicants are willing to wait for a house.
- 2.6 There is a shortage of level access family size accommodation within the social housing stock of the borough, and this will widen the cohort of families that can be allocated such a property where mobility needs require additional space, or a family member would benefit from their own rooms.
- 2.7 Finally it is proposed to enable key workers employed within the borough to benefit from the accommodation if no further interest is forthcoming.

3. Policy framework implications

- 3.1 The Housing Allocations Policy enables Local Lettings Policies to be introduced – where over 50 properties are affected, this needs to be agreed by Housing Committee prior to its introduction.

4. Resource implications/Value for Money

4.1 The proposed Local Lettings Policy will be implemented by the Housing Allocations Team within Housing Solutions.

4.2 Implementation will have no additional resource implications.

5. Legal implications

5.1 Housing authorities are required by [section 166A\(1\)](#) of the Housing Act 1996 to have an allocation scheme for determining priorities, and for defining the procedures to be followed in allocating housing accommodation; and they must allocate in accordance with that scheme ([section 166A\(14\) Housing Act 1996](#)). All aspects of the allocation process must be covered in the scheme, including the people by whom decisions are taken. In the Secretary of State's view, qualification criteria form part of an allocation scheme.

5.2 [Section 166A\(6\)\(b\) of the Housing Act, 1996](#) enables housing authorities to allocate particular accommodation to people of a particular description, whether or not they fall within the reasonable preference categories, provided that overall the authority is able to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of [Section 166A\(3\) Housing Act, 1996](#). This is the statutory basis for so-called 'local lettings policies' which may be used to achieve a wide variety of housing management and policy objectives.

6. Equality implications

6.1 An Equalities Screening has been completed and no equality implications have been identified from the introduction of the Local Lettings Policy at Surrey Towers.

7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

7.1 None

8. Consultation

8.1 A number of residents have been spoken to individually regarding this proposed policy.

8.2 Additional consultation will be undertaken with residents on the proposals at the 'consultation event' for Garfield Road residents on 30 May 2023.

9. Timetable for Implementation

9.1 If the Local Lettings Policy for Surrey Towers is approved, it will be implemented following the Housing Committee meeting on 7th June 2023.

9.2 A review of the policy will be conducted annually at the June meeting of the Committee.

10. Conclusions

10.1 The purpose of proposing the Local Lettings Policy for Surrey Towers is to ensure demand for accommodation within the block remains strong and therefore that available accommodation can be quickly relet.

- 10.2 Without intervention via a Local Lettings Policy relet times for the accommodation within the block will continue to exceed the total average relet times and potentially deteriorate further.
- 10.3 This proposed policy will be reviewed annually to assess whether it continues to be required or whether it needs amending.
- 10.4 This increases the opportunities to provide suitable accommodation for disabled residents, both mobility and children in need and additional room due to Autistic Spectrum Disorders.

(To resolve)

Background papers

Runnymede Borough Council's Housing Allocations Policy [Housing Allocations Scheme \(runnymede.gov.uk\)](http://runnymede.gov.uk)

Appendix A – Surrey Towers Proposed Local Lettings Policy