

REPORT TO: Housing Committee - 15 October 2001

REPORT ON: Review of House Letting Regulations – Local Points

REPORT BY: Director of Housing

REPORT NO.: 607-2001

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. This report recommends a change to the House Letting Regulations to remove local area points.

Approval is sought to put this amendment in place to co-incide with the agreed changes to the Area Office boundaries which will take place once the Ardler Stock transfer is complete.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. The existing regulation, which permits the award of local points, should be removed from the House Letting Regulations.
- 2.2. All applicants who will be affected should be contacted and advised of the change and the House Letting Regulations and Allocations Scheme booklet should be amended accordingly.
- 2.3. Following consultation with DFTA it is proposed that a review is undertaken of the Six Year Rule contained within the House Letting Regulations.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. The recommendations contained in this report will require amendment to the "House Letting Regulations and Allocation Scheme" booklet. Letters will also be sent to all applicants affected by this change.

4. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

This report has implications relevant to the following Local Agenda 21 theme:

- that local needs are met locally.

5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. This report will ensure equality of access to housing on the basis of housing need.

6. BACKGROUND

- 6.1. The local area points are introduced in the 1996 Review of the House Letting Regulations with the aim of encouraging stable communities and assisting the rehousing of redevelopment applicants. It was agreed that an applicant's existing area would be the management area in which they live, effectively splitting the city into four "local" areas.

- 6.2. The decision of Housing Committee on 18 June 2001, to redefine the Area Office boundaries and the proposal to amend some letting areas has led to a need to consider the effectiveness of this regulation.

7. ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED

- 7.1. The award of local area points could be viewed as discriminatory. It does reduce the opportunities for applicants to be housed outwith their own management area, and for applicants from outwith the city to qualify for housing, unless it is readily available.
- 7.2. The local areas are very large. Currently Central Area Office covers a large geographical area. An applicant can apply from an address in Blackness, and be awarded local area points for Barnhill, which is physically distant and not recognised as the same community. They could not, however, be awarded local area points for City Road, which although much closer, is managed by Lochee office.
- 7.3. Many applicants apply for housing in their current area and elsewhere in the city. They end up, therefore, having 2 sets of points – one set for their local management area, and one set for all other areas in the city. The dual points make the system difficult for applicants to understand.
- 7.4. Awarding local area points also has the effect of skewing demand. Applicants may apply for housing in their own area because they get additional points; therefore qualify for housing sooner, and not necessarily because they really want to live in that area long-term. It has resulted in giving a somewhat false picture city-wide of how demand is spread.

8. IMPACT OF REMOVING LOCAL AREA POINTS

- 8.1. Removal of local area points would remove the issue of possible discrimination, and place all applicants whether applying from within Dundee or from outwith the city on a more equal footing.
- 8.2. All applications would be assessed on the basis of housing need, and waiting time, and all those who currently benefit from the additional 6 local area points would have them removed. This would lead to a general reduction in points across the board. In theory, applicants who have the greater housing need should benefit, particularly if they wish to move outwith their own management area.

For example:

Applicant A who is an owner in Central. Form in for 5 years looking to be housed in Central, so local area points are awarded.

= 10 points time
= 6 points
= 16 points

Applicant B is a tenant, overcrowded, living at the same address in Camperdown for 5 years, but with a new application form.
10 medical points for housing in Central, but no local points, as their address is in Lochee.

= 5 points o/crowding
= 10 medical points
= 15 points

If local points lost: **Applicant A = 10 points**
Applicant B = 15 points

8.3. The system will be simplified, as applicants will only have one set of points for housing anywhere in the city.

9. **SIX YEAR DEFERRAL RULE**

9.1. During the consultation process DFTA have proposed that the Six Year Rule in the House Letting Regulations be reviewed. The rule was introduced in 1997 and concerns relate to the impact this is having on tenants who may wish to be rehoused prior to completing six years of their tenancy.

9.2. A review of the rule and its effectiveness is now appropriate.

10. **CONCLUSIONS**

10.1. The local area points no longer serve a real purpose. We are trying to encourage new customers, gain more flexibility within the lettings process, and reduce barriers to housing. It therefore seems appropriate to remove points, which discourage cross-city moves, and disadvantage applicants from outwith the city.

10.2. If the decision is taken not to remove local area points, once the new Area Office boundaries are finalised, the difficulties involved in swapping local area points would be considerable.

11. **CONSULTATION**

11.1. All Chief Officers and DFTA have been consulted on the contents of this report.

ELAINE ZWIRLEIN
DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

Signed: _____

Date: _____