

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	16 NOVEMBER 2016	AGENDA ITEM:	11
TITLE:	HOUSING REGISTER - RE-REGISTRATION EXERCISE		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR RICHARD DAVIES	PORTFOLIO:	HOUSING
SERVICE:	HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOODS	WARDS:	ALL
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The Council has conducted a wholesale re-registration for applicants on the Housing Register in preparation for the introduction of a new housing allocations IT system. This reports sets out the results of the re-registration exercise.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee note the results of the Housing Re-Registration exercise.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Whilst Reading Borough Council Housing Service completes partial re-registrations of applicants on the Housing Register, a wholesale re-registration has not been done for some time. In order to ensure a transfer of data that is as accurate as possible to a new IT system, the service took the opportunity to carry out a full re-registration exercise.
- 3.2 The process has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of households on the Council's Housing Register, with 88% of those not re-registering being in the 'No Priority' category, followed by Band E (low priority).
- 3.3 Officers attempted to contact all of those in bands A-C (who had failed to re-register) by telephone to speak to applicants in person to ensure that they understood the process, and to encourage those in need to register. A wide range of internal and external services were also contacted to advise them of the process so that they could encourage applicants to respond and assist

those that are vulnerable. Support was also available to applicants with filling out forms from a number of sources.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 There were a total of 5,207 households on the Housing Register as at the end of September 2016 and 2,878 of those remain in housing need. 1,213 of these are in Bands A-D and 385 of these are homeless applicants. Table 1 shows the breakdown of the Housing Register by priority band.

Table 1: Housing Register as at 30th September 2016

Bedroom Need	1	2	3	4	5	6+	Total	%
Bands								
A	12	5	6	1	2	0	26	0.50%
B	146	46	10	2	2	0	206	3.96%
C	122	214	98	23	12	3	472	9.06%
D	226	158	88	32	4	1	509	9.78%
E	436	678	423	96	27	5	1665	31.98%
No priority	1391	688	211	35	4	0	2329	44.73%
Total	2,333	1,789	836	189	51	9	5207	
%	44.81%	34.36%	16.06%	3.63%	0.98%	0.17%		100%

4.2 Despite the drop in numbers on the Housing Register, there remains a shortage of affordable housing in Reading - unfortunately evidenced by continued significant use of B&B in spite of strenuous efforts by the Council to increase the supply of affordable housing in the town through a variety of means. This includes continuing to promote our innovative Rent Guarantee Scheme; proactively seeking to prevent homelessness and supporting those impacted by welfare reforms; and working positively with housing associations, landlords and agents in the town. Work is also underway to build new permanent Council homes, new temporary accommodation and to develop a new Council owned housing company 'Homes for Reading'.

4.3 Table 2 shows the change in registered applicants by band following the re-registration exercise. An analysis of the reduction in numbers registered by priority banding as a result of the re-registration exercise shows that the bulk of the reduction (4,601 or 91%) comes from the lowest band E and the 'no priority' category.

Table 2: Change in registered applicants by band

Band	Total Nov 2015	Total Sept 2016	Change	% change for each band
A	29	26	-3	10%
B	354	206	-148	42%
C	576	472	-104	18%
D	713	509	-204	29%
E	2,997	1,665	-1,332	44%
No priority	5,598	2,329	-3,269	58%
	10,267	5,207	5,060	-

4.4 Officers undertook further analysis to better understand why a significant number of applicants had not re-registered.

4.5 The reduction in higher priority bands is likely to represent tenants who have resolved their own housing situation through carrying out mutual exchanges and under occupiers (Band B) who no longer wish to move. The low return rate from those with little or no priority is likely to be as a result of applicants having not obtained social housing over a number of years and repeated media publicity on housing both locally and nationally confirming that there is very limited social housing available (and limited likelihood of being accommodated through this route therefore).

4.6 Whilst a re-registration can always be expected to significantly reduce numbers on a Housing Register, with further welfare reforms on the horizon and depletion in the stock of social housing it is inevitable that the numbers of households on the Housing Register will continue to rise in relation to those in housing need.

4.7 Following the implementation of the new IT system the Housing Service plans to now carry out a full re-registration of the Housing Register on an annual basis in order to ensure that applications are kept up to date with accurate details.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 Completing a re-registration exercise ensures that the Council has up to date information on those households in housing need. This contributes to the service priority in the Council's Corporate Plan 2015-18:

- Providing homes for those in most need.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None. National law and a local council's allocations policy set out who can apply for a council home. Not everyone qualifies. Reading Borough Council's Allocation Scheme sets out the rules about who can apply for social housing within Reading Borough and how the Council manages and allocates social housing via Homechoice at Reading.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None directly from this report.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None.