

COMMUNICATIONS AND ALLOCATIONS REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS RESPONSE

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| 1 | Website – Tenant Zone Whilst the Panel agreed that overall the ‘Tenant Zone’ area of the site contains the type of information we as tenants would like to read we particularly identified the following points in our review: | |
| | Recommendation | Response |
| 1.1 | A need to ensure that the Customer Review Panel page is updated with the current focus of review and proposed future review. It still refers to Re-let standards and should have changed to Communications. A list of future meeting dates so that interested parties could attend. | Agreed and the Customer Review Panel page has been updated. |
| 1.2 | When referring to e.g. the Customer Review Panel or Social Housing Quality Standards the abbreviation or any other jargonised term should not be used in the first instance, any subsequent reference can then be by the abbreviation. Not all readers will know what CRP or SHQS stands for. | Agreed and will seek to avoid or explain any jargon used in our communications. |
| 1.3 | Insert the words ‘click here’ before any links, as not all readers are aware of this and that these are links which will connect them with another page. | Agreed and will introduce this. |
| 1.4 | The ‘How are we performing?’ area needs updating with the most recent Quarterly Reports. | Agreed and this has now been done. |
| 1.5 | Have a link to the Tenants Handbook at the end of the FAQ’s for any further queries customers may have. | We have a link to the Tenants Handbook at the start of the FAQ,s but will rearrange this to be placed at the end of the FAQ,s. |
| 1.6 | FAQ section should include information on different waste collection times for different areas etc. OR a direct link to the SBC website waste collection page. | We will look to introduce direct links to relevant external websites where appropriate. |
| 1.7 | The pictures need updating e.g. Customer Review Panel as well as pictures of previous staff members no longer with the organisation | Agreed and a review of all pictures on the website will be undertaken to identify those requiring updating. |

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| 2. | Allocations - “Applying for a Home” leaflet In this part of our scrutiny exercise we identified the following points the majority of which are for clarification purposes. | |
| | Recommendation | Response |
| 2.1 | The order of information in the booklet should be rearranged. E.g. have the ‘What happens if I am successful for an offer’ section after the ‘priority section’. | Agreed |
| 2.2 | Page 5 last paragraph states that if an applicant refuses 2 suitable offers then they will be suspended for 3 months. It goes on to say that after 3 months the suspension will be lifted “provided you have rectified the reason for your initial suspension”. This does not make sense and should be deleted as the suspension refers specifically to the refusal of 2 suitable offers only. | Agreed |
| 2.3 | In the review of the ‘Applying for a Home’ leaflet the consequences of declining offers given the high percentage of refusals should be given more prominence. Currently this is covered by only one line in Section 6 Suspending Applications “For refusal of two reasonable offers – suspension 3 months.” | We do also refer to the consequences of refusing two reasonable offers on Page 5 of the leaflet. However we will look to highlight the consequences of refusing two reasonable offers of housing. |
| 2.4 | Acknowledgement letter- the third paragraph needs changing to reflect that ‘Other available properties’ are no longer separated and are advertised alongside newly available properties and not differentiated. | Agreed |
| 2.5 | Armed Forces Priority application- the third bullet point, change ‘either serving’ to ‘who has served’. Overcrowding priority - clarify where one bed space would not actually qualify for another bedroom and the need for a bronze priority pass. Having two levels of priority may be confusing for applicants. | Agreed |
| 2.6 | Priority Pass rejection letter - needs to include the reasons for being rejected. These are required in the event of an applicant wishing to appeal. | Agreed |

| 3 Allocations Process | | |
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| | Recommendation | Response |
| 3.1 | <p>During overview from management on the allocations process, the Panel also noted that relet timescales were higher in comparison to Scottish average figures. There appears currently a gap between an applicant being sent an offer letter following the closing date of the property and the property being viewed when Ready to Let. With the intention of reducing relet times and refusals, could consideration be given to an accompanied inspection with the Property Services Manager which we understand is done within 3 working days of the termination date, to enable the successful applicant to view the property and be advised of any upgrading work. At this stage the chosen applicant can be asked whether they are still interested and, if not, it may be that other works could be identified which might secure the allocation rather than receiving a refusal when the property is ready to let much later and then having to go to the next person then. We think this could help to reduce refusals and relet times.</p> | <p>In considering this suggestion we have to bear in mind that we have in the region of 200 vacancies per year and to offer an accompanied inspection with the Property Services Officer would impact on his ability to do the other tasks he has responsibility for. Allowing applicants the opportunity to view the property before the void works are completed could be counter-productive and lead to applicants turning down properties as they are not seeing the properties at their best. There are also health and safety issues in allowing applicants to visit void properties where the electrical safety check has not been completed or where staff have commenced working in the property with tools and materials in the property. In our experience where there are high demand properties applicants who have pre-accepted will nearly always take up the offer of the tenancy.</p> <p>However there could be some properties where we have few applicants and we anticipate it might be difficult to let. In these circumstances and provided there are no health and safety issues then we could look to arrange an accompanied viewing as suggested.</p> |
| 3.2 | <p>If the accompanied inspection with the applicant is approved as above consider giving successful applicants a short 'cooling-off' period after viewing the property when ready and before signing up. We think to have these done on the same day could be seen as pressurising applicants into signing up and having the cooling off time, would avoid any applicant feeling 'pressured' and not thinking it through properly. This may help with longer tenancies, as we noted some were terminated after short periods.</p> | <p>If the accompanied viewing is carried out before the completion of void works then it will be possible to allow 2 or 3 days for the applicant to make a decision as the property will not be available for the applicant to move in to until these works are completed. Our staff will look to exercise a degree of flexibility in the time given to applicants to decide on an offer however if we give applicants 2 or more days to make such a decision this will have an adverse impact on our relet times. It should be noted that applicants will have made the decision to bid for the property so presumably they will have given some thought to the implications on them of being offered the property.</p> |

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| 4 | <p>Settling in Visit Survey The panel had suggested new tenants be surveyed on satisfaction with the allocation process. We were informed that such a question was contained within the settling-in visit survey, and so we included in this exercise a review of the questions asked within the survey form.</p> | |
| | Recommendation | Response |
| 5.1 | <p>Survey leaflet suggested points: Q7 delete 'generally' Q8 insert email and other (please specify).</p> | Agreed |
| 5.2 | <p>We noted that surveys are not completed independently by new tenants but with housing staff about 5-6 weeks after the tenancy has started. We consider that tenants could feel under pressure to answer positively and any improvements to service needed could be being missed. We think these should be sent out for independent completion with follow-up by housing staff to make sure they are completed.</p> | <p>Using postal means to distribute these surveys would lead to a significant reduction in survey returns. Evidence indicates that levels of survey completion are considerably higher when they are carried out face to face. In addition the settling in visits are an important means by which our staff can check that the tenants have moved into the property, have made rent payment arrangements and are generally conducting their tenancy satisfactorily. It also provides an opportunity for the Housing Officer to establish a working relationship with the tenant. As a result we would not agree to this suggestion.</p> |