

AUDIT OF HOUSING NEEDS – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Housing Needs audit took place during the period August to September 2009 and was conducted by means of discussion with relevant staff, review of documentation and the Anite Housing Management system. The audit focussed on management and operational controls to provide assurance that the work processes and systems operating within Housing Needs are efficient and effective.

We found that one applicant living in a Council property, made an application using the form intended for the use of applicants not currently housed by the Council (or partner Registered Social Landlord) instead of a Transfer Waiting List form. Another applicant, who had previously been, but who was no longer on the Housing Register, submitted a Change of Circumstances form instead of a Housing Application Form.

Banding criteria varies dependant on an applicant's current circumstances and the acceptance of the wrong form could result in an inappropriate allocation being made.

There were two instances where hard copy documentation could not be found. This introduces the risk of ineligible applicants being included on the Housing Register or eligible applicants being inappropriately banded.

A random sample of 20 applications for inclusion on the Housing Register were reviewed to ascertain whether the "banding" group that the applicant had been allocated was reasonable. We found an instance where the applicant had quoted a police incident number but there was no evidence on file to support the incident being authentic. It was considered by Internal Audit that the gold banding allocation was generous.

We reviewed a random sample of 15 allocations made during the previous 12 months and found that two Void Monitoring Sheets had not been signed by the officer making the allocation, and one sheet did not include the reason for the allocation being made to the chosen applicant. This could mean the Council is unable to defend itself if criticised for the decision, or would not be able to offer a satisfactory explanation if challenged on the validity of the allocations.

Conclusion

This review has highlighted a few failings in some areas, but we are confident that the Housing Needs Manager will work with his team to ensure these issues are dealt with. In our opinion, after careful consideration we are able to provide a 'positive opinion' which is translated into 'adequate' assurance.

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