

Mar 17, 2022

# Minutes of the Board meeting held on Tuesday 15 February 2022 in the offices and on Zoom (Special meeting to review ICHR Policy)

Present (in the office)	n/a
Present (via Zoom)	Brian Corrigan, Chair Kelly Ferns, Vice Chair Heather Thomson, Secretary David Brown, Susan Skelton, Ken Robertson, Patrick Marshall, Eileen Tamburrini, Eleanor Robertson, Alan Hutchison
Attending (in the office)	Andy Thomson, Head of Housing Services (HOH) Louise Carlin, Senior ICHR Project Officer (PO)
Attending (via Zoom)	Mary MacDonald, Senior Housing Officer (SHO)

1.	<b>Apologies &amp; Declarations of Interest</b>  No apologies submitted.  There were no declarations of interest.
2.	<b>Inverclyde Common Housing Register (ICHR) Joint Allocations Policy Review</b>  HOH explained progress to date with ICHR joint policy: the policy has been agreed by ICHR Steering Group and a full consultation with applicants and stakeholders took place at the end of 2021. The policy has been approved by OTHA Management Committee and approval now being sought from Cloch Board.  HOH clarified an error in the report about the information relating to child access. He confirmed that applicants who have access to a child/children up to 3 nights per week can apply for an extra bedroom to accommodate the children. Applicants with children staying 4 nights or more will have the children included as part of the overall household.  An explanation was given about the change in policy from using points to priority passes. This will ensure that a fair share of allocations are given across the board and not just to one priority group. Under occupation will now be given the same level of priority as overcrowding which will help free up larger properties to re-let.  The Board were invited to comment or ask questions.  Concern was raised that the priority passes could exclude many groups and that the policy should be made clearer to show that applicants who do not fit into any of the priority pass groups can still apply and be successful in being allocated a house. A suggestion was made to create a leaflet/summary of the policy, which would be

easier for customers to understand. HOH noted that a summary of the policy would be produced as a matter of course and will be done following approval by all RSL's.

A board member asked if this new policy would impact on the Wellpark Local Lettings Initiative. HOH noted that the Wellpark LLI would expire on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 with the new policy being implemented from 1 April 2022 so there would be no impact with the new policy on the LLI.

A board member asked if the joint policy had been approved by the other associations yet. HOH explained that OTHA Management Committee have approved the policy but that Larkfield and Sanctuary have still to approve the policy.

A question was asked about whether we still have tied accommodation. HOH explained that we do not have this type of accommodation anymore since we don't have a full time warden at Elliot Court. PO explained that tied accommodation is in the policy as we used to have applicants who had been asked to leave their tied accommodation when their job was finished e.g. Inverclyde Council School Janitors. The ICHR does not often get an applicant leaving tied accommodation anymore.

A board member asked about the feasibility of asking an applicant's ex-partner for a letter confirming a child access arrangement. PO agreed this was not always possible and often depended on the couple being on good terms. The policy wording had been amended following a meeting with our solicitor who had advised us of an alternative option. Staff will endeavour to evidence the child access arrangement where possible.

A question was asked about an applicant refusing 2 reasonable offers and how this may be detrimental to a tenant who is part of a refurbishment/decant programme. HOH explained that tenants who were required to move out of their property for refurbishment would not be expected to apply for housing through ICHR; they would be treated as a management allocation, which should result in them being offered suitable accommodation.

A board member queried the policy changing from using a points based system to a priority pass system and what was the "norm." PO explained that all the associations who form the These Homes "collective" use priority passes and RCH use bands and groups. The ICHR were one of a few organisations still using points so a move to priority passes would bring ICHR in line with other associations.

#### **Resolution**

The Policy was proposed, seconded and unanimously approved.

### **3. These Homes Demonstration – New ICHR Software**

The PO demonstrated the new These Homes software from an applicant's perspective showing how to complete the form and apply for a property (change in terminology from bidding). HOH noted that one of the main drivers for the software change was that the current software was not very user friendly and that staff resources were taken up dealing with facilitating access to the system for applicants. The Board were happy with the look of the new software and commented that it did seem more user friendly.

	<p>Comments were made by two board members that the property adverts need to be more informative and detailed. Often there are no photographs of the property, which can lead to time wasting for an applicant and staff. The board members felt that applicants should be able to see internal photographs and room sizes before applying for a property. HOH noted that he agreed with this and most recent difficulties were Covid-19 related however we need to be better at this. He expects staff to show all aspects of the property “warts and all” so that only those applicants who truly wish to move to that property will make an application for that property. The current software also makes this process very difficult but it is hoped that with the These Homes software we will add more pictures and we can also add videos of the property.</p> <p>A board member asked if the software had been tested on a phone or an iPad. PO noted that the software works equally well on a phone and tablet as the system has been optimised for use on all devices.</p> <p>A board member asked if applicants would be able to see their bid position. PO noted that this would not be the case initially as the “collective” of RSL’s who designed These Homes did not require this but it is something we hope to ask for in the future.</p> <p>A suggestion was made that ICHR could show a typical layout of a property when advertising. HOH noted that we can look at how we can do this and attempt to implement this where possible.</p> <p><b><u>Resolution</u></b> The Board noted the presentation.</p>
4.	<b>AOCB</b>
4.1	No other business.
5.	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>15<sup>th</sup> March 2022</p> <p><b>The meeting closed at 6.39pm.</b></p>