

# Framework for the Implementation of Local Lettings Policies

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**Document Information****Revision History**

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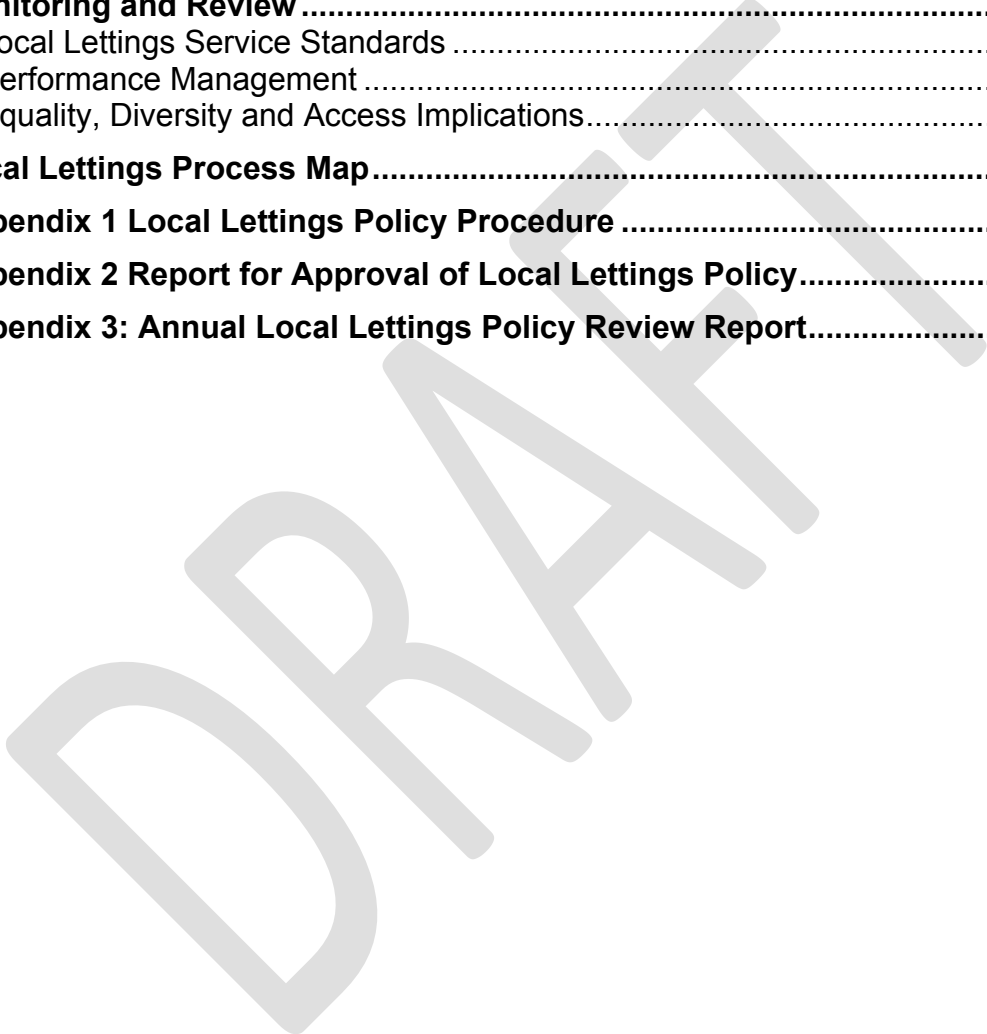
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## Introduction

The Common Allocations (SARTH) policy recognises that partners may wish to implement initiatives to help tackle local housing issues through the use of local lettings policies. Examples of local housing issues which may require the development of a local lettings policy are:

- Concentrations of deprivation
- Large new developments where it is felt that a new community needs to be established
- Supporting tenant employment opportunities through job related moves and those who are making a positive contribution to a particular area in an economic or voluntary capacity
- Rewarding positive behaviour by supporting transfers for existing tenants even when they do not have reasonable preference
- Under-occupation and/or overcrowding
- The needs and sustainability of rural communities e.g. where affordability of housing is an issue
- Some properties, usually in defined locations, can only be let subject to additional occupational criteria as they are subject to a Planning Obligation under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- Regenerations areas

The framework for implementing local lettings policies sets out the approach that will be taken by Flintshire County Council and gives due consideration to Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996, which enables Local Authorities under Section 167 (2E) to allocate accommodation to people of a particular description whether or not they fall within the reasonable preference categories, provided that overall the Local Authority is able to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of Section 167, where reasonable preference must be given to certain categories e.g. persons who are homeless, overcrowded or occupying insanitary conditions.

The framework also considers the code of guidance for Local Authorities on the allocation of accommodation and homelessness 2015, by ensuring that any local lettings policies that are implemented have a clear aim linked to community sustainability, are supported by evidence, must not discriminate on the grounds of gender, race or disability, have procedures that inform strategic priorities and are regularly reviewed and monitored for effectiveness.

## Local Lettings Framework Statement

Flintshire County Council continuously seek sustainable solutions to help improve people's lives, respond to local housing issues and create safe and pleasant neighbourhoods, where people want and aspire to live. As a landlord we recognise the importance of balancing the needs of new tenants and the interests of existing tenants to create mixed and sustainable neighbourhoods.

The overall aim of this framework is to:

- Set out when adjustments will be made to the main Common Allocations Policy (SARTH) to meet specific local housing issues
- Comply with current legislation and good practice
- Develop a consistent and sustainable approach to neighbourhood management
  
- Contribute to sustainable, diverse and balanced communities

### **Local Lettings Framework Aim and Objectives**

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The overall aim of implementing a framework for local lettings policies is to respond to and address local housing issues, helping to create sustainable, vibrant and healthy neighbourhoods and communities where people want and aspire to live.

The overall objectives of the framework for implementing local lettings policies are:

- To help tackle identified areas of low demand helping to ensure we maximise the investment in our existing homes
- To maintain the long term sustainability of established and new areas creating vibrant, healthy and great places to live
- To help support and encourage balanced and cohesive communities where people choose to live
- To improve community safety by addressing and preventing issues of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and harassment
- To protect both the interests of local residents and our homes by seeking to prevent or reverse social decline and deprivation

The degree and extent to which the overall aim and objectives are applied will vary between each local letting policy in recognition of the different local housing issues and the sustainability of the community, which will be supported by clear evidence.

## Local Lettings Policy

The decision to implement a local letting policy will require the prior consent of a Senior Manager and Cabinet Member for Housing. Local letting policies may be used in defined geographical areas or on new build developments. In the main, the majority of the SARTH lettings policy will apply, however local lettings policies will include additional criteria that will be considered when letting properties in order to address local housing issues and sustainability within a neighbourhood. A local lettings policy can be considered for use on a percentage of the lettings made in a defined geographical area or new build development, in line with best practice e.g. 50% of lettings will be made via the local lettings policy.

In adopting a local lettings policy there should be:

- A clear aim and objectives for the scheme supported and agreed in advance by a Senior Manager and Cabinet Member for Housing
- A limited time period for the use of the local letting policy, agreed from the outset and subject to review on an annual basis
- Consultation with local Elected Member, residents group and other RSLs working within the neighbourhood
- Monitoring, review and reporting systems in place

### Evidencing the need for Local Letting Policy

When considering whether to introduce a local letting policy, a report must be submitted to the Senior Manager and Cabinet Member for Housing covering the following:

- Purpose of the scheme
- Stock turnover levels
- Average re-let times for the area compared to average re-let time for the area as a whole
- Current demand for the area
- Number of refusals before a property is accepted
- Number of ASB cases within the area
- Any repair costs related to ASB or criminal damage
- Other local housing issues e.g. employment, mixture of household composition

The procedure for approval to implement a local letting policy is summarised in Appendix 1.

### Sensitive Lettings

There are some circumstances where it may be beneficial to allocate a void property as a 'sensitive let'. This will generally be used to address/ manage specific issues, such as the makeup of a particular block of flats by having flexibility to avoid lifestyle clashes. In cases where 'one off' sensitive lets need to be made, consent must be obtained from a Senior Manager in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing. When making the decision to consider a sensitive let, the existing community balance and any problems that have previously been experienced should be considered and taken in to account.

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The criteria may include:

- A mix of household sizes to give a balanced community
- Age of the potential tenant
- Employment status
- Convictions

The decision to make a sensitive let via the use of these criteria would be made to support the long term sustainability of the neighbourhood and/or benefit those residents who have experienced significant ASB in the past, normally over a prolonged period of time.

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## Monitoring and Review

Flintshire County Council will monitor and review the effectiveness of any local lettings policies that it implements through the agreed service standards and performance management key performance indicators (KPIs).

### Local Lettings Service Standards

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The following service standards have been agreed to support the framework for implementing local lettings policies:

- All local lettings policies will be reviewed annually and a review of the impact reported every year to the Chief Operating Officer, Community and Enterprise and Cabinet Member for Housing
- Consultation will take place in the neighbourhood with any residents groups, where appropriate prior to the introduction of a local lettings policy
- The number of sensitive lettings made will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis

### Performance Management

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To manage and monitor the effectiveness of any local lettings policies that are implemented, the following performance management KPIs are in place:

- Measures of levels of ASB
- Tenancy turnover
- Average re-let times
- Average length of tenancy
- Termination reasons

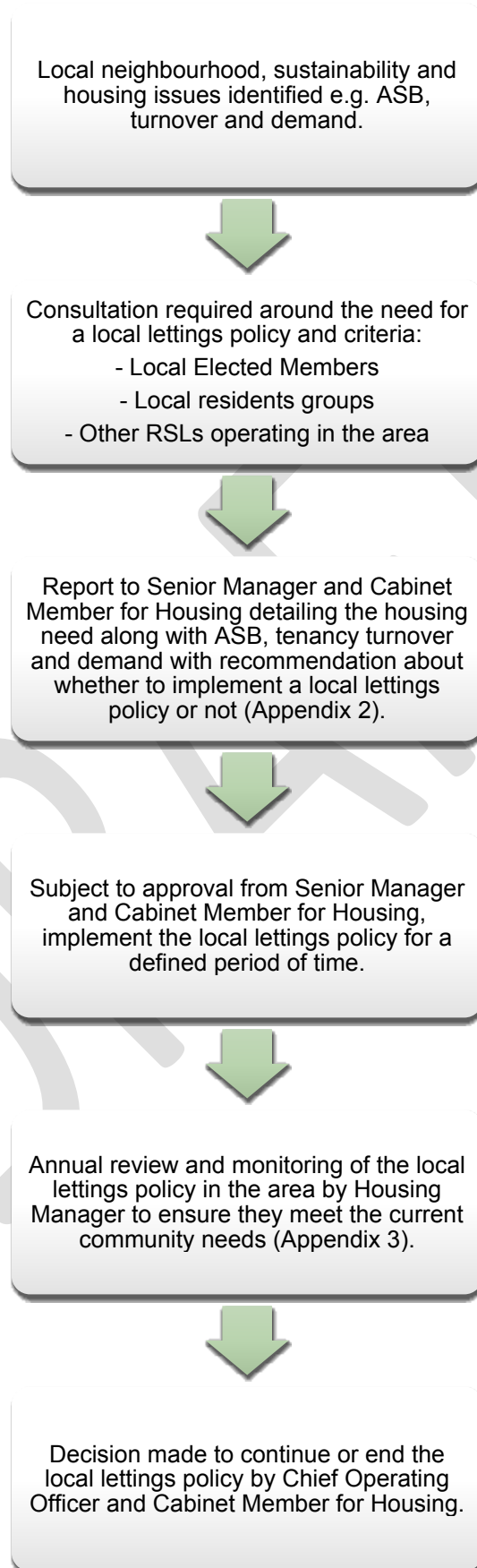
### Equality, Diversity and Access Implications

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The impact of this framework for implementing local lettings policies will be monitored, to ensure that it promotes equality of opportunity to individuals and minority groups. To support this, all customers will be asked to provide details of their ethnic origin and any other demographic information when they sign a tenancy with the Council.



## Local Lettings Process Map



## Appendix 1 Local Lettings Policy Procedure

### 1. Clear Objectives

The Officer involved in the introduction of local lettings policy must be able to demonstrate the identified need for implementing the policy. To do this, a detailed report must be produced for the Senior Manager and Cabinet Member for Housing for approval. A template report setting out the information required to support the implementation of a local lettings policy is outlined in Appendix 2.

### 2. Control Measures

To establish the need for a local lettings policy, various measures need to be considered and there must be evidence of one or more of the following needs:

- To help tackle identified areas of low demand helping to ensure we maximise the investment in our existing homes
- To maintain the long term sustainability of established and new areas creating vibrant, healthy and great places to live
- To help support and encourage balanced and cohesive communities where people choose to live
- To improve community safety by addressing and preventing issues of ASB and harassment
- To protect both the interests of local residents and our homes by seeking to prevent or reverse social decline and deprivation

This will involve evidence of management problems (e.g. no waiting list for a period, tenancy turnover rates, and incidents of ASB), which may be supported by evidence derived from further investigations e.g. consultation questionnaires. This evidence will be dependent upon the nature and scope of each individual local lettings policy.

### 3 Consultation

Before developing a local lettings policy, consultation is required with local elected members, customers and other registered social landlords working in the neighbourhood. This will need to take place in a range of forms dependent upon the nature of the individual local lettings policy to be considered. Consideration should also be given as to whether there are particular development / planning agreements in existence that may require 'change of use' permission. An Equality Impact Assessment must be carried out in order to assess the adverse impact the policy may have on customers.

### 4. Approval

Local lettings policies must be approved by a Senior Manager and Cabinet Member for Housing.

### 5. Monitoring and Review of Local Lettings Policies

At the outset, a time period should be agreed for each local lettings policy and subject to review on an annual basis. In some cases, such as an age restriction scheme e.g. over 55 schemes these may not be time limited as once approved, they would remain the same.

The use of local lettings policies should be reviewed each year by the Housing Manager (Appendix 3) to ensure they meet the current needs of the community. A review of the impact of any local lettings policies should be reported, at least every year to the Chief Operating Officer, Community & Enterprise and Cabinet

Member for Housing with delegated authority for a decision on whether to continue to implement the policy. An annual report will be produced for Scrutiny Committee to monitor and review the overall effectiveness and outcomes of any local lettings policies that have been implemented.

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## Appendix 2 Report for Approval of Local Lettings Policy

**REPORT TO:**

**DATE:**

**REPORT BY:**

**SUBJECT: LOCAL LETTINGS POLICY FOR (AREA)**

### 1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this paper is to seek approval for a local lettings policy in (insert area) to help us achieve a balanced community and sustainable tenancies.

### 2.00 BACKGROUND

Outline the reasons why a local lettings policy is required along with a breakdown of the area profile to include:

- Location of properties
- Description of properties - how many units
- Age profile of residents
- Average length of tenancies

### 3.0 SUPPORTING DATA AND EVIDENCE

Here, set out the supporting evidence and include:

- Stock turnover levels
- Average re-let times for the area compared to average re-let time for the area as a whole
- Current demand for the area
- Number of refusals before a property is accepted
- Number of ASB cases in the areas
- Repair costs related to ASB damage
- Indices of deprivation
- Employment

### 4.0 RECOMMENDATION

The review period is to be included and the outcome linked to the relevant objectives of the framework for implementing a local lettings policy:

- To help tackle identified areas of low demand helping to ensure we maximise the investment in our existing homes
- To maintain the long term sustainability of established and new areas creating vibrant, healthy and great places to live
- To help support and encourage balanced and cohesive communities where people choose to live
- To improve community safety by addressing and preventing issues of ASB and harassment
- To protect both the interests of local residents and our homes by seeking to prevent or reverse social decline and deprivation

### 8.0 EQUALITIES IMPACT

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Within this section, you will need to confirm that:

- An EIA has taken place and that residents attended the session
- Detail the outcome of the EIA
- Detail any adverse impact identified for any groups
- Confirm what actions have been agreed to react to any adverse impact

### **9.0 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN**

In developing this local lettings policy, consultation has taken place with (insert details of who/ where) and demonstrates the extent of consultation undertaken.

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## Appendix 3: Annual Local Lettings Policy Review Report

**REPORT TO:**

**DATE:**

**REPORT BY:**

**SUBJECT: ANNUAL LOCAL LETTINGS POLICY REVIEW**

### 1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to review the use of the local lettings policy in (insert area) which aims to help support and achieve a balanced community, sustainable tenancies and reduce the level of ASB by improving community safety.

### 2.00 BACKGROUND

Outline the reasons why the local lettings policy was introduced in the specific area and the overall aim and objectives of the policy.

### 3.00 CURRENT POSITION

Provide details on the current position e.g. if there is evidence to support that local housing issues are improving and the sustainability of the neighbourhood.

Include year on year comparative indicators

Evidence	Previous year	Current position
Stock Turnover		
Re-let Times		
Demand		
Property Refusals		
ASB Cases		
ASB Costs – Repairs		

### 4.00 RECOMMENDATION

Summarise the findings of the review and make a recommendation for the future use of a local lettings policy linked to the objectives below:

- To help tackle identified areas of low demand, helping to ensure we maximise the investment in our existing homes
- To maintain the long term sustainability of established and new areas creating vibrant, healthy and great places to live
- To help support and encourage balanced and cohesive communities where people choose to live
- To improve community safety by addressing and preventing issues of ASB and harassment
- To protect both the interests of local residents and our homes by seeking to prevent or reverse social decline and deprivation