Slough Borough Council

Summary of proposed changes

In introducing the revised Housing Allocations Policy we seek to:

- Provide an accessible, fair and transparent service
- Meet local housing need
- Meet the housing need of the most vulnerable
- Prioritise those with the greatest / most urgent housing needs
- Make the best use of existing social housing stock
- Ensure equality of treatment for all applicants.
- Meet the regulatory requirements and industry standards.

The proposed changes

The flow and format of the document has been changed to improve accessibility and cover all key regulatory requirements. Every section has been reviewed and refreshed and is now set out in the following sections.

Section	Title
Part 1:	Introduction
Part 2:	Options for housing in Slough
Part 3:	Eligibility and Qualification
Part 4:	Applications and Assessments
Part 5:	Allocations and Lettings
Part 6:	Decisions, Complaints and Reviews

The proposed changes are **summarised** below:

1. Options for housing in Slough
   Social housing in Slough is in short supply with demand far outweighing the Council's ability to provide housing for applicants on the Housing Register. It is important that those who are in a position to find another way to resolve their housing, should be provided with a set of alternative options. Beside the Housing Register this includes:
    - Underoccupation scheme for council tenants.
    - Mutual exchanges between social housing tenants.
    - Adapting the home where assistance with mobility is needed.
    - Low cost home ownership
    - Private renting
    - Help and advice
    - Nomination to a registered provider
    - New developments

2. Household Income Threshold

The current policy has a household income threshold of £55,00 per annum. Social housing should be prioritised for applicants who will struggle to find a home in the private sector. We are proposing to reduce the household income threshold based on average annual earnings in Slough. If your annual household income is over **£39.059 per annum**, you will not be able to join the Housing Register. We will review this figure annually.

3. Savings, Assets and Capital Threshold

The current policy has a savings threshold of £20,000. Social housing should be prioritised for applicants who will struggle to find a home in the private rented sector. We are proposing to reduce the savings threshold which aligns with the threshold set for Universal Credit and adopted by many local authorities. If you have, savings, assets or capital worth more than **£16,000** you will not be able to join the Housing Register; exceptions may be made for those who are vulnerable or have a specific medical need.

4. Adequately Housed

Currently we allow applicants who are adequately housed to join the Housing Register. This inflates the size of the Housing Register making it more difficult for other applicants to bid successfully for a home. Social housing which is in low supply must be prioritised for those with a housing need who cannot afford to buy or rent privately. Therefore we propose that going forward, anyone who is adequately housed will not be permitted to join the Housing Register.

5. Refusal of a single offer

Currently there is no penalty for refusing an offer. We are proposing that an applicant who refuses their single offer of accommodation will be removed from the Housing Register and they will not be able to reapply for 12 months. This creates movement on the Housing Register giving the opportunity to applicants who may otherwise have to wait for a long time before receiving an offer.

6. Former members of the Armed Forces

We are governed by legislation when dealing with former members of the armed forces and their family members. This states that they will be accepted onto the Housing Register if the individual is serving in the regular forces or who has served in the regular forces within five years of the date of their application. We are proposing to remove the five years in line with many other authorities across the country.

7. Young Carers

Many full-time carers are young and living as part of the household of the person needing care. Often, they have siblings and have to share a bedroom. They may struggle to keep up with their studies and get adequate sleep and downtime when they are full time carers. Adult carers who live in, are awarded their own bedroom. In the interest of fairness, we are proposing to award a young carer their own bedroom for the duration of the time that they are providing the care.

8. Sharing a bedroom with a child of the same sex

Currently children of the same sex share up to the age of 16. We are proposing to raise this to 18. The wait for large properties is considerable as we have very few of them. By raising the age, it will allow the Council to manage the demand for these larger units to those who are severely overcrowded.

9. Over Occupation

As a rule we do not allow social housing to become over occupied. Properties are allocated based on bedroom entitlement. The shortage of large family sized accommodation is particularly acute and waiting times are therefore substantially longer than for smaller sized accommodation. In some circumstances where households are waiting for large properties, we may consider allocating them to a slightly smaller property provided it would alleviate severe overcrowding and provided everyone in the household has an adequate bedspace.

10. Medicals

We are proposing to reduce three medical priority awards to two awards, emergency (Band A) and Urgent (Band B). There will be no medical award in Band C; in order to qualify for a medical award, the applicant or someone in their household must have a health condition which is impacted by their housing. The proposed medical awards are:

- **Emergency Health Priority Award**: someone is in hospital/residential care and cannot return home because it is not suitable or extreme exceptional circumstances or where a former member of the armed forces has received a serious injury in the line of duty.

- **Urgent Health Priority Award:** someone who has a severe long-term limiting illness or permanent and substantial disability and health or quality of life are severely affected by their current home.

11. Banding and Priority

Band A is now emergency priority and will contain the fewest applicants in line with industry practice. Band B become urgent priority and Band C moderate priority. The table below shows the revised housing need categories in each band.

Band	Housing Need
Band A (Emergency Priority)	Emergency Health Priority, fleeing violence (domestic abuse, risk of serious harm or death), management transfers, public or witness protection, insanitary conditions, emergency decants, underoccupation and release of a significantly adapted property.
Band B (Urgent Priority)	Homeless – prevention, relief and main duty, urgent health award, care leavers, fostering or adoption, move on, urgent decants, Overcrowding (2B +)

Band C (Moderate Priority)	Homeless - non – priority and intentionally homeless, overcrowding (1B), key workers and right to move

12. Community Contribution

Currently applicants with a community contribution are awarded Band B. It is proposed to remove this section entirely. For 2026/27 we propose that fostering and adoption will be awarded Band B priority.

13. Adult child of tenant

We are proposing to introduce the option to rehouse young adults aged 18 or over, into a studio or 1 bedroom property, to **remove** or **significantly reduce** the overcrowding of the main household. The applicant or the young adult can make the request. Large family properties are in short supply, and this will allow us to either reduce the overcrowding in the main household or remove it completely.

14. Allocation of a property

We will continue to do direct lets, but from now on this will be restricted specific types of applicants such as homeless households in temporary accommodation or a vulnerable adult. We are introducing choice based lettings for the majority of applicants on the Housing Register. You will be able to bid for a suitable property anywhere in the borough. Once the advert closes, applicants will be shortlisted with Band A applicants at the top and Band C applicants at the bottom. The property is offered to the highest bidder. If you fail to bid, even though suitable properties were advertised we may remove you from the Housing Register. This is in line with the majority of local authorities across the country.

15. Homeless Households

With the cost of temporary accommodation high and homelessness demand considerable, there is a need to look at a range of measures which will mean going forward that all homeless cases must be on the Housing Register, the local authorities will do more to stop someone becoming homeless and improve discharges into the private rented sector. In addition to the banding changes covered in point 13 above , we will use direct offers to fast track moves for households in temporary accommodation and raise the annual homelessness lettings target from 65% to 70% for 2026/27 and it will be reviewed every 3 months.

16. Affordability checks when allocating social housing

We are introducing a new section on affordability checks. Being able to pay rent and service charges is key to a tenant being able to sustain their tenancy. How much a resident can afford to pay for their housing costs will vary depending on the type of accommodation they live in and their financial circumstances. Carrying out affordability checks when allocating a home gives confidence to incoming tenants that they will be able to afford the home and assists them with maximising their income.

17. Application Renewals

Application renewals are already covered by the policy and are undertaken every 12 months. We are proposing to increase the frequency for applicants in Band A; they will be renewed every 3 months. Band A is an emergency category and it is important that any changes in their circumstances are captured quickly. For the vast majority of applicants in Band A we will already have the information so we will not have to contact them unless their priority is changing and they are being reassessed. Band B and Band C applicants will continue to be renewed every 12 months.