

This does not cover provisions more relevant to another department (e.g. planning), or the main provisions relevant to housing stock owning authorities.

## Localism Act 2011 – housing provisions directly affecting Gedling Borough Council

### Discharge of homelessness duty into private sector

Previously, although we could arrange an offer of private rented housing instead of social rented to end a homelessness duty, the applicant could choose whether to accept it.

When section 148 is commenced, they will have no choice so long as the property offered is otherwise suitable.

This could significantly reduce the time people spend in our temporary accommodation, freeing it up to help more families.

We need to produce a policy setting out how we will treat applicants and what we regard as suitable. This work is planned for late 2012.

We have arranged for Environmental health Officers to receive Housing Health & Safety Regulations training to assist with this process

### Allocation to qualifying persons

Previously, any person who was not ineligible (normally on immigration grounds) could join the housing register and wait for social housing.

When sections 145 to 147 are fully commenced, a person must be eligible but must also “qualify” to join the register. The government sets certain categories who automatically qualify (those who have “reasonable preference”, such as overcrowded households).

Beyond this, we could decide that people who have low, or no housing need, do not qualify for social housing, or qualify only if they are contributing to the community, or any other appropriate and non-discriminatory approach.

This will require a revised joint Allocations Policy with Broxtowe and Rushcliffe, planned for early 2013.

### Duty to produce tenancy strategy

Housing providers can now choose whether to offer “lifetime” tenancies as before, or to offer fixed term tenancies, and can choose what to take into account when renewing them.

In developing their individual policies they must have regard to the local authority’s tenancy strategy, which must be published by 15 January 2013. The decision about what tenancy to offer a person is for the provider, not the local authority.

Subject to member approval, GBC are working on a joint strategy with Nottingham and Broxtowe. Housing providers have been consulted and a draft is nearly ready for consideration/consultation.

We aim to seek member approval for the tenancy strategy in autumn 2012.

### Access to housing ombudsman

The Independent Housing Ombudsman considers complaints from social housing tenants who feel they have not been dealt with fairly by their landlord. (It does not consider complaints about the homeless or housing register functions of local authorities).

From 1 April 2013, a tenant wishing to complain will have to approach their MP, a local councillor, or a designated tenant panel. They can then try to resolve the complaint themselves, refer it on to the Ombudsman, or decide to do neither, in which case the tenant can refer it themselves.

We need to establish whether Gedling Homes will be designating a tenant panel and, if not, provide briefing and appropriate support for members, in consultation with local MPs, to allow them to consider these complaints.