

## **THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL**

### **REQUEST FOR THE USE OF EMERGENCY POWERS – CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

**SUBJECT:** Homes4U Advertising and Allocation Process

1. **Authority to amend the advertising procedure for H4U and to advertise available Council Homes electronically only due to the temporary cessation of Gem hardcopy publication.**
2. **Authority to relax the bidding and refusal criteria for H4U applicants considering the current restriction on movement and social isolating criteria.**

1. **Originating / Department / Service –**

Environment and Housing - Housing Services

2. **Reason for Seeking Emergency Powers –**

Due to Government guidelines outlining the need for social distancing and travel restrictions, the local Gem newspaper has closed its offices and cancelled further publication and delivery until further notice.

This means that Housing Services is not able to continue to advertise fortnightly in the local free newspaper all social housing available to rent in the Vale of Glamorgan in line with the Homes4U Allocation Policy

As a result, it is proposed to adopt the following procedure, which will ensure equality of access to all applicants on the Homes4U Scheme to ensure as many people as possible are able to move into a suitable home that will meet their needs.

All available social housing will be advertised on the following websites:

- Vale of Glamorgan Council
  - Hafod Housing Association
  - Newydd Housing Association
  - United Welsh Housing Association
  - Wales & West Housing Association
- A ValeConnect Text will be generated and sent to all applicants on the Homes4U Scheme to advise them that the advert is 'live' to view, and bids can be placed;
  - The Homes4U Advert will be sent to all applicants with a registered email address;
  - The link to the Advert will be uploaded to the Council's Facebook page and also circulated via Twitter;
  - Once the advert/bidding period ends, a separate list of all applicants suitable for each property will be generated whether they have bid or not in order to also capture those applicants who are digitally excluded.

The applicant with the highest priority and oldest registration date will then be contacted by telephone and offered the property;

- Where an applicant is unable to be contacted by telephone, Housing Services will use staffing resources available to visit their home, whilst observing social distancing outside to make the applicant aware of the offer either verbally or by leaving a note if the applicant is not at home;
- Given the significant challenges currently being experienced because of the pandemic, the successful applicant will be made aware that in order to secure the property they must be in a position to view in person or virtually and be able to make the necessary arrangements to move in, sign for the tenancy and take up residency;
- Where applicants are not in a position to do this the offer will be withdrawn and made to the next eligible applicant;
- Applicants will be advised that given the current pandemic, any refusal of a property at this time will not adversely affect their Homes4U application or banding

Due to the current issue with Covid 19 and the possible need to secure more self-contained temporary accommodation for people currently living in shared housing e.g. the homelessness hostel or temporary accommodation with shared facilities, each fortnightly advert will also carry a rider. This will advise applicants that due to these unprecedented times, properties that appear in the advert may also be withdrawn at short notice.

### 3. **Policy Framework and Budget** –

PLEASE INDICATE as appropriate that the matter that you are seeking the use of Emergency Powers for is a Cabinet or Council function.

Cabinet

Council

### 4. **Relevant Scrutiny Committee** –

Homes and Safe Communities

#### **IMPORTANT**

The following sections **must** be completed **prior** to the request being submitted to the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Section for processing.

I confirm (delete as appropriate)

(a) That there are no financial implications and the relevant Cabinet Member, Leader and / or the Deputy Leader has been consulted and is in agreement with the use of Emergency Powers; **or**

~~(b) That, in view of the financial commitments, the Head of Financial Services, the appropriate Chief Officer, the relevant Cabinet Member, Leader and / or Deputy Leader have been consulted and are in agreement with the use of the Emergency Powers and that~~

~~(c) — For matters relating to the Planning Committee the Chairman of the Planning Committee has also been consulted and is in agreement with the use of Emergency Powers;~~

~~(d) — For matters relating to the Licensing Committee the Chairman of the Licensing Committee has also been consulted and is in agreement with the use of Emergency Powers.~~

~~(e) — For matters relating to the Welsh Church Act Estate Committee the Chairman of the Welsh Church Act Estate Committee has also been consulted and is in agreement with the use of Emergency Powers.~~

~~(f) — For matters relating to policy the relevant Scrutiny Committee Chairman has been consulted and is in agreement with the use of Emergency Powers.~~

**Signed:** Mike Ingram  
**(Instructing Chief Officer)**

**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> April 2020

**Please print name:** Mike Ingram

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**I hereby approve under my Emergency Powers the attached recommendation(s) on behalf of the Cabinet / Council (please delete as appropriate).**

**Signed:** ....D.R. Thomas..... **Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> April 2020...  
**Managing Director**

**NB Should the relevant portfolio Cabinet Member be unable to be consulted only the Leader and / or Deputy Leader be consulted in their absence.**

**N.B. Cabinet: 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2020 Minute No. 295**