

# Midlothian Council

## Consultation Report on the Housing Allocation Policy Review

2019



The word cloud above uses responses from the Housing Allocation Policy Review Survey.

## Contents

	Page
<b>Introduction</b>	3
<b>Section 1: Analysis of Survey of Tenants and Prospective Tenants</b>	5
<b>Section 2: Midlothian Tenant Panel, Drop in Events and Group feedback</b>	12
<b>Section 3: Analysis of Written Feedback</b>	15
<b>Conclusion</b>	30

## **Introduction**

As part of Midlothian Council's commitment to involving tenants and other service users in the management of housing services it undertook the planned consultation on the Housing Allocation Policy as part of a review of the operation of the Policy which was introduced in 2013.

It is important that we make best use of our housing stock, which includes how these are allocated. Scottish Government guidance requires that houses are let in a way that gives reasonable preference to those in greatest housing need, which makes best use of the available stock and helps to sustain communities.

## **What was the Council's Approach to Consultation?**

In early 2019, officers considered the appropriate methods to undertake consultation on the Housing Allocation Policy Review. Following a review of good practice, the following methods were agreed:

Development of an easy to read and attractive newsletter which provided information on the current Housing Allocation Policy and details of some possible changes that could be implemented. This was sent to all council tenants and applicants on Midlothian Council's Housing List.

Development of a survey which sought the views of tenants and prospective tenants on possible changes to the Policy.

Three consultation drop -in events across Midlothian during March and April 2019

Consulting with members of the Midlothian Tenant Panel and other tenant and resident groups.

Providing tenants and prospective tenants (housing applicants) with a range of ways of providing feedback, including face to face, telephone, online, text messaging and post.

The consultation arrangements for the Council's Housing Allocation Policy ran concurrently with an Affordable Housing Survey.

This report contains key information derived from the consultation exercise, including:

Analysis of Survey Data which indicated the level of support for potential changes to the Policy.

Feedback from tenants groups and meetings.

Officer's responses to comments received during the consultation process.

## Section 1: Analysis of Survey of Tenants and Prospective Tenants

A total of 10,304 surveys were sent out on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2019 with the deadline for responses being the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2019 (this was later extended to 10 May to allow time for more returns). Table 1, below, shows that 8% of tenants and 8% of housing applicants responded to the survey, with a total of 850 surveys completed. The majority of surveys were completed via postal returns while 74 respondents completed their survey online.

**Table 1: Response Rate to the Allocation Policy Review Consultation**

Respondent Type	Total Number	Number of Respondents	Percentage Response
Tenant	6511	536	8%
Applicant	3793	314	8%
Total	10304	850	8%

Please note that the applicant number does not reflect the number of applicants on the waiting list. Applicants who are current tenants were counted as ‘tenants’ only to avoid two copies of the survey being sent to the same household.

Table 2, below, shows how each of the individual group types responded.

**Table 2: Response Rate by waiting list type**

Respondent Type	Number of Respondents	Percentage Response
Tenant	536	63%
General Needs	199	23%
Choice	69	8%
Homeless	46	5%

## Question 1

### **Do you think the Choice Group should be removed from the Allocation Policy?**

There are 790 applicants on the Choice List; households which have no housing or medical need who simply wish to move house e.g. a homeowner or a council tenant who wishes to move house but has no housing need such as being overcrowded or medical needs.

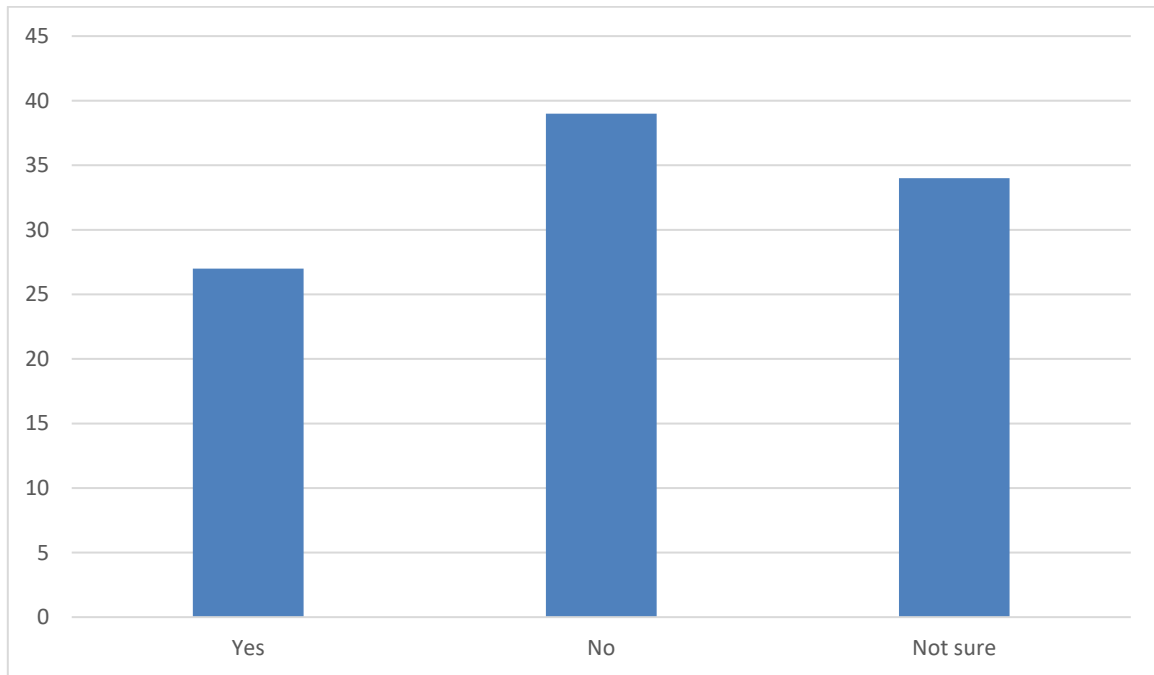
Removing the Choice List and the 10% targets of lets made to these households would increase the letting target for both the Homeless and General Needs Groups.

Chart 1 below, shows that the majority of tenants and applicants did not support removing the Choice Group; 39% of respondents disagreed with the proposal, 34% didn't know and 27% agreed with it. By and large these figures were the same when separated into tenant and applicant categories – 39% of both groups were against the proposal whereas 28% of tenants supported it compared to only 24% of applicants.

When separated into respondent type, the figures show that 27% of the Choice group were in favour of removing their group, 39% were against it and 34% were not sure. In terms of Homeless applicants, 24% supported removing Choice, 31% did not and 44% were not sure. The statistics for General Need's applicants and tenants were quite similar – 25% and 28% were in favour of removing the group, 39% of each group were not supportive and 36% and 33% were not sure, respectively.

The high percentage of 'don't know' returns suggests that respondents either felt ambivalent about the question or required further information to make a solid decision.

### Chart 1: Do you think the Choice Group should be removed from the Allocation Policy?



#### Comments received on Q1 and the Choice Group:

*'concerned about going down to the list if there isn't a choice group'*

*'should only be general group and have fairly equal chance of climbing list as anyone else'*

*'if its not broken don't fix it'*

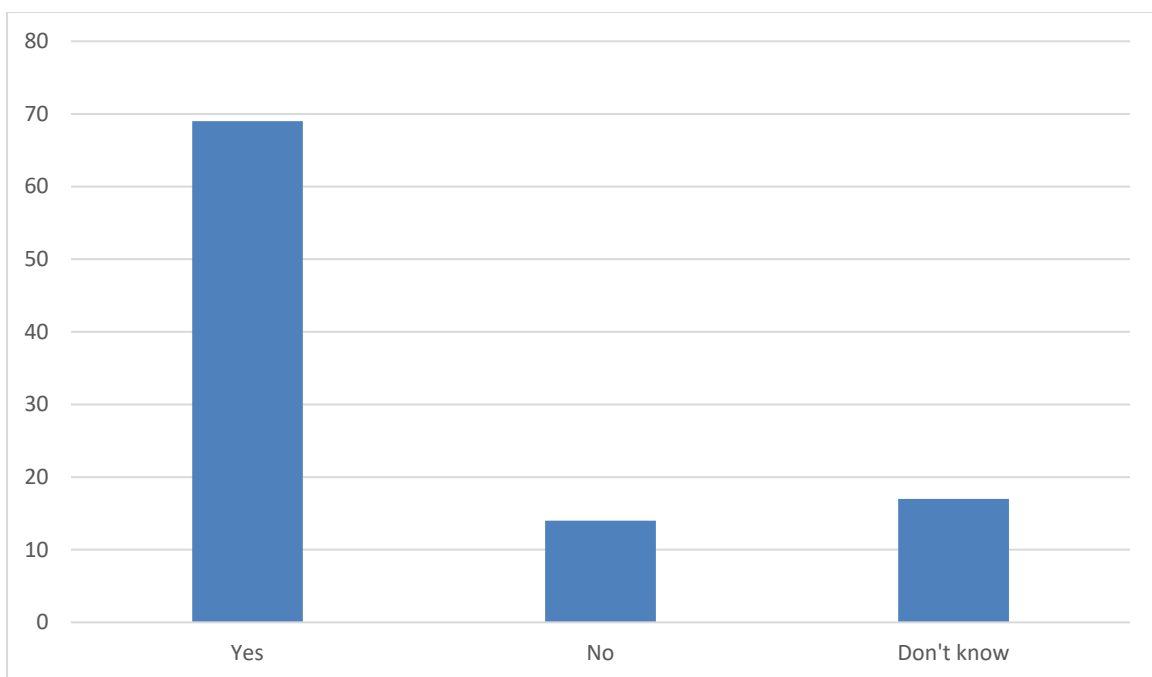
### Question 2

#### Do you think that the Council should extend the Incentive to Move Scheme to households moving down by 1 bedroom size?

This scheme currently supports households to downsize by two bedroom sizes or more (and free up larger properties) by providing a payment of £1500 e.g. a tenant who moves from a three bedroom house to a one bedroom house or from a four bedroom house to a

two bedroom house can claim the payment. Tenants and applicants were asked whether the scheme should be extended to encourage households moving down by one bedroom size to move into smaller properties. Chart 2 below, shows that 69% of respondents agreed that the scheme should be extended whilst only 14% disagreed. The figures were very similar amongst both tenants and applicants – 68% and 69% both agreed respectively.

**Chart 2: Do you think that the Council should extend the Incentive to Move Scheme to households moving down by 1 bedroom size?**



Comments received on Q2 and the Incentive to Move Scheme:

*'I live in a 3 bedroom house and I would move if you get help downsizing, I think more people would do the same'*

*'I think people who are in larger houses that they don't need are made to downsize so bigger families can live comfortably'*

*'one bed property doesn't have enough -no space, wardrobes, cupboards in kitchen'*

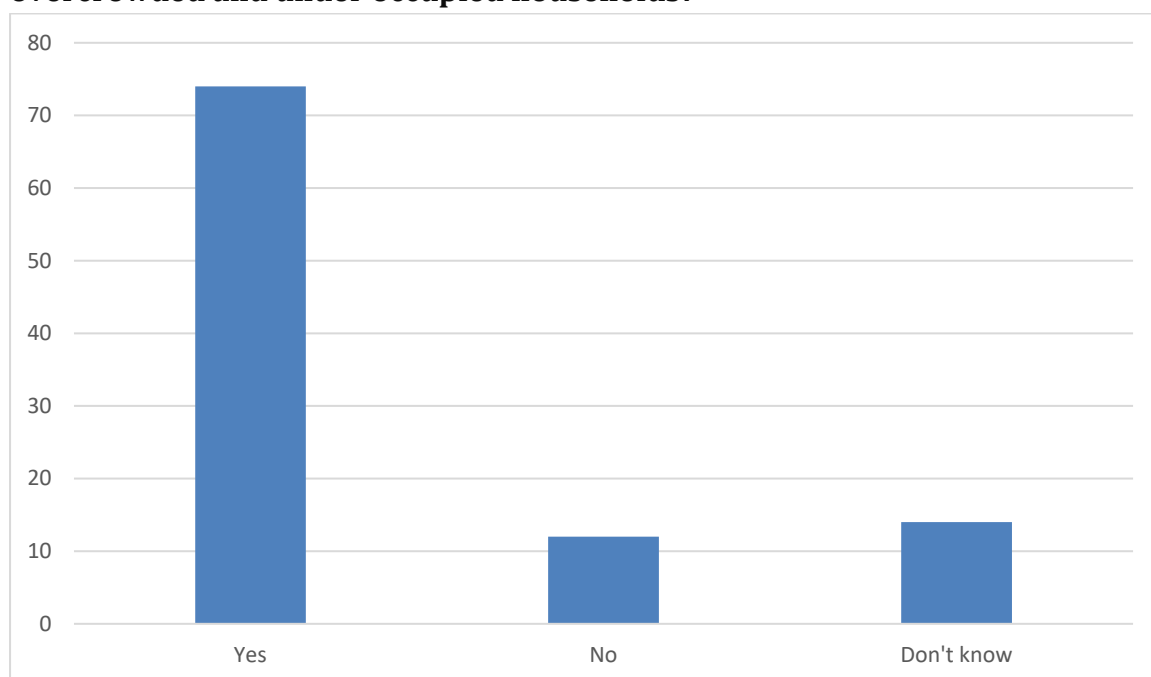


### Question 3

#### **Do you think the Council should award more application points to overcrowded and under occupied households?**

Households with too few or too many bedrooms could be awarded more points to help reduce the time taken to rehouse them – at present both overcrowded and under occupied households receive 30 points per bedroom required, with a maximum of 90 points awarded. Chart 3 shows that 74% of respondents agreed with this proposal with only 12% disagreeing and the remaining 14% unsure. These figures were similar when separated into tenant and applicant respondents – 75% and 73% agreed with the proposal respectively.

**Chart 3: Do you think the Council should award more application points to overcrowded and under occupied households?**



Comments received on Q3 and overcrowded/under occupied households:

*'people with kids who can't stay over, due to having no room, living with parents or in shared accommodation should be given more points'*

No!- to overcrowded families who don't work

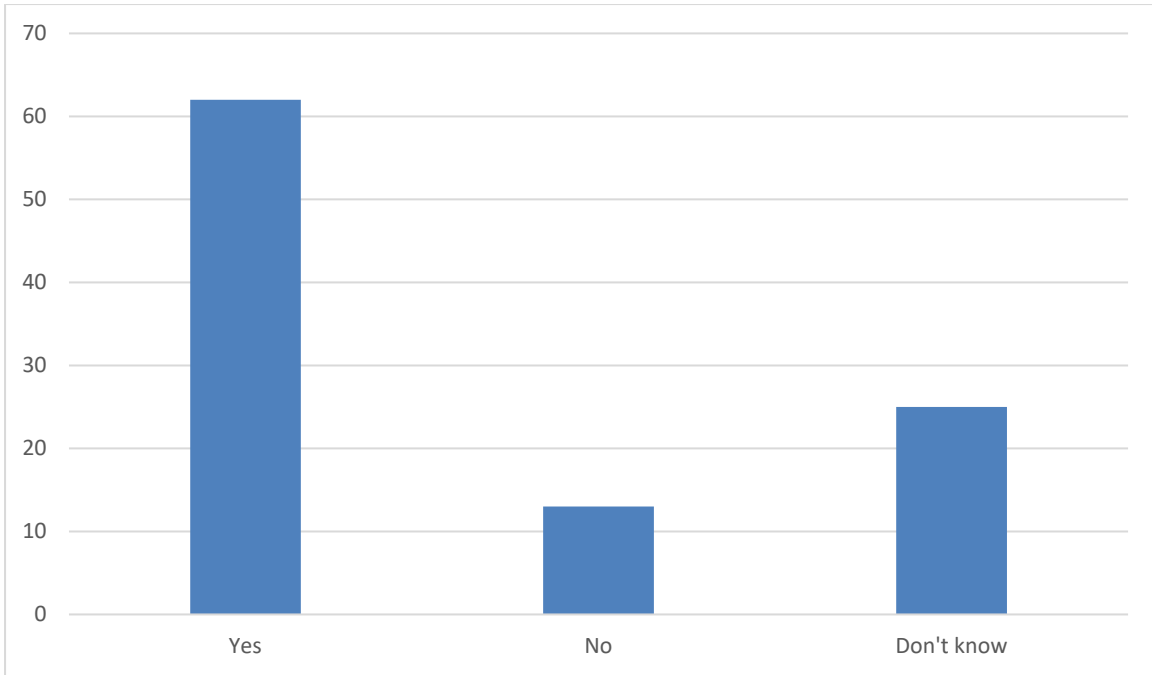
## **Question 4**

### **Do you think the Council should continue using Local Lettings Initiatives when allocating new build properties?**

Midlothian Council currently uses Local Lettings Initiatives (LLIs) which give priority to current tenants and residents who live in the areas where new council homes are being built. For instance, the Local Lettings Initiative for Gorebridge (2017) detailed four criteria for allocating the new builds in that area – all of which prioritised current Gorebridge tenants and housing applicants. LLIs also list issues which cannot be taken into consideration including age, income and rent arrears which have been paid back.

Chart 4 illustrates that 62% of respondents agreed that these initiatives should continue to be used, 13% disagreed and 25% were not sure. Once again, these figures didn't differentiate much once separated into tenant and housing applicant respondents – 62% and 63% agreed with the proposal. It is worth noting the quarter of respondents who were not sure about this question.

#### **Chart 4: Do you think the Council should continue using Local Lettings Initiatives when allocating new build properties?**



Comments on Q4 and Local Lettings Initiatives:

*'priority should be given to people already resident in area over people just moving to area'*

'local should get priority'

## Question 5

**In terms of updating our procedures for homeless applicants, do you think the Council should:**

**Option A – Give additional priority points to homeless households who have not been permanently housed after spending a very long period of time in temporary accommodation.**

**Option B – Place a requirement on homeless applicants to widen their areas of choice and house types to increase their chances of being permanently housed more quickly.**

Currently there are just under 1,000 homeless households in Midlothian and many of them face a long wait in temporary accommodation and sometimes bed and breakfast.

Midlothian Council has recently published a Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan which aims to reduce the level of homelessness in Midlothian and the time it takes to rehouse people.

Possible changes to support homeless households could include options A and B above – option A would involve awarding more application points to homeless households who have been in temporary accommodation for a set period of time and option B would require homeless households to choose a set number of areas and house types they would accept, thereby not restricting themselves and lengthening their time in temporary accommodation by only choosing one area and one house type.

Chart 5A illustrates the response to option A and shows that 71% of respondents agreed, 12% disagreed and 17% were not sure. When separated into applicant types the support for awarding additional priority points is more varied – 88% of homeless applicants were in favour compared with 78%, 71% and 65% from choice applicants, tenants and general needs applicants respectively. Unsurprisingly 0% of homeless applicants were not in favour of option A, whereas 16%, 11% and 10% were not in favour from general needs, tenants and the choice group respectively.

**Chart 5A: Give additional priority points to homeless households who have not been permanently housed after spending a very long period of time in temporary accommodation.**

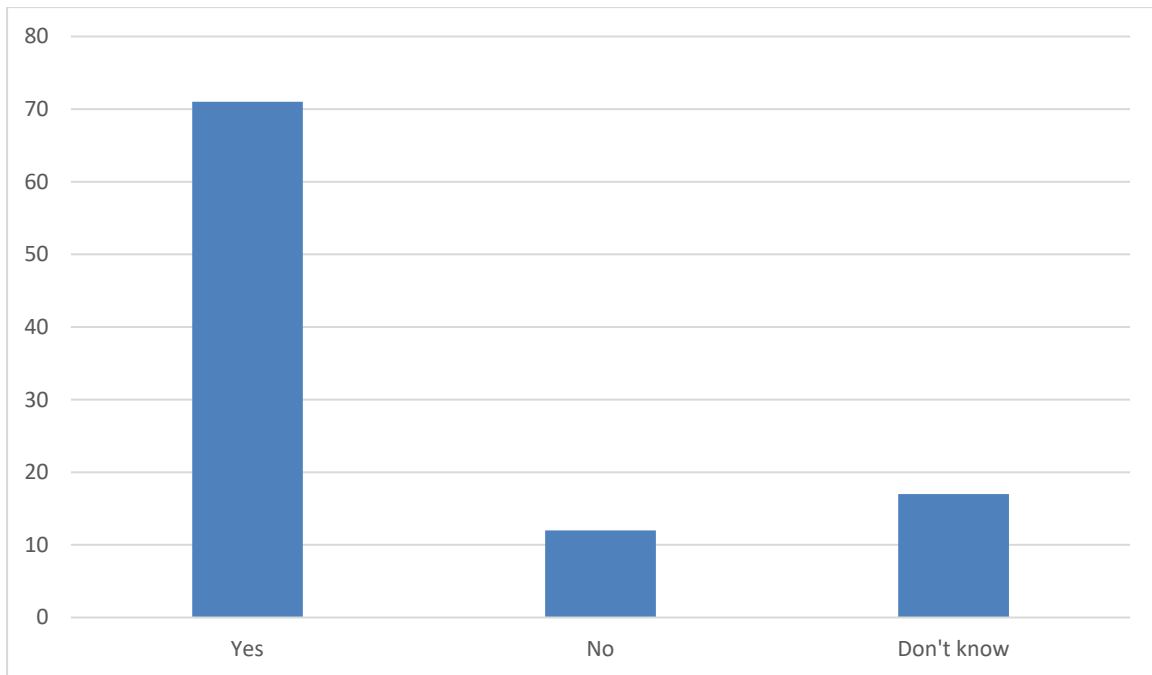
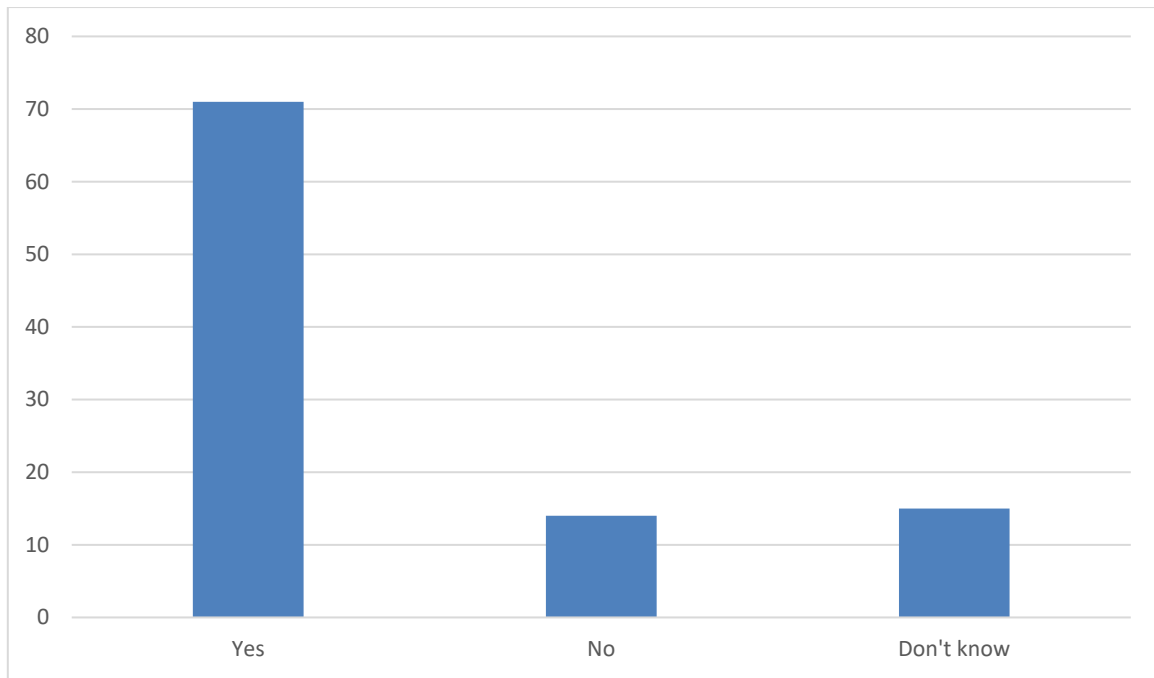


Chart 5B shows the results of the proposal to require homeless applicants to widen their areas of choice and house types to increase their chances of being housed more quickly – 71% of respondents agreed with this proposal, 14% disagreed and the remaining 15% were not sure. Again, once separated into applicant groups the results differ greatly – 44% of homeless applicants were in favour compared to 81%, 75% and 70% from the choice group, general needs group and tenants respectively. 38% of homeless applicants were not in favour of option B and 18% were not sure.

**Chart 5B: Place a requirement on homeless applicants to widen their areas of choice and house types to increase their chances of being permanently housed more quickly.**



Comments received on Q5 and homeless procedures:

*'I'm not sure how to answer q5 - been homeless since 2016, unable to stay in temp due to daughter visits at weekend, staying in a caravan'*

'more points for homeless families with young children'

'more houses for homeless'

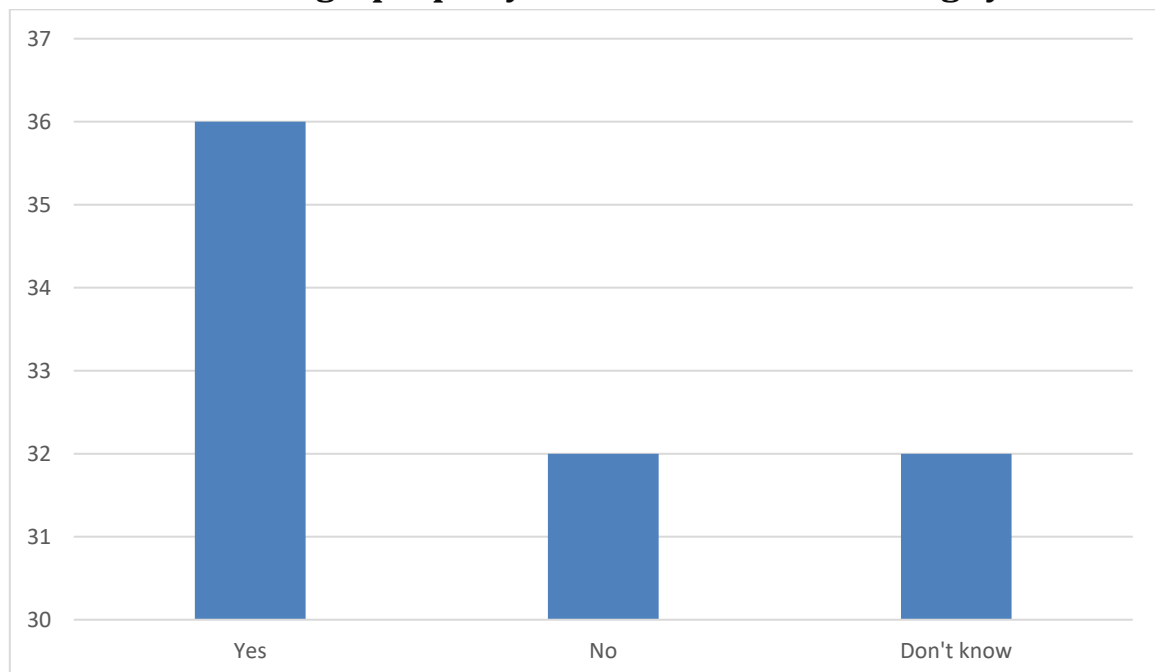
## Question 6

### **Do you think the Council should change from the existing method of allocating a property to a Choice Based Letting system?**

Instead of using the current group and point's allocation policy, Midlothian Council could switch to a choice based letting system. This is the system used by some of the largest landlords in Scotland and is supported by the Scottish Government. Choice Based Letting allows applicants to view a list of properties available to let online and bid on properties they are interested in, with the applicant with the highest level of points being successful in bidding for a property. Choice based letting gives applicants a greater say in choosing where they want to live and they are more involved in the allocation process.

Chart 6A shows that 36% of respondents were in favour of this proposal, 32% disagreed and another 32% were not sure.

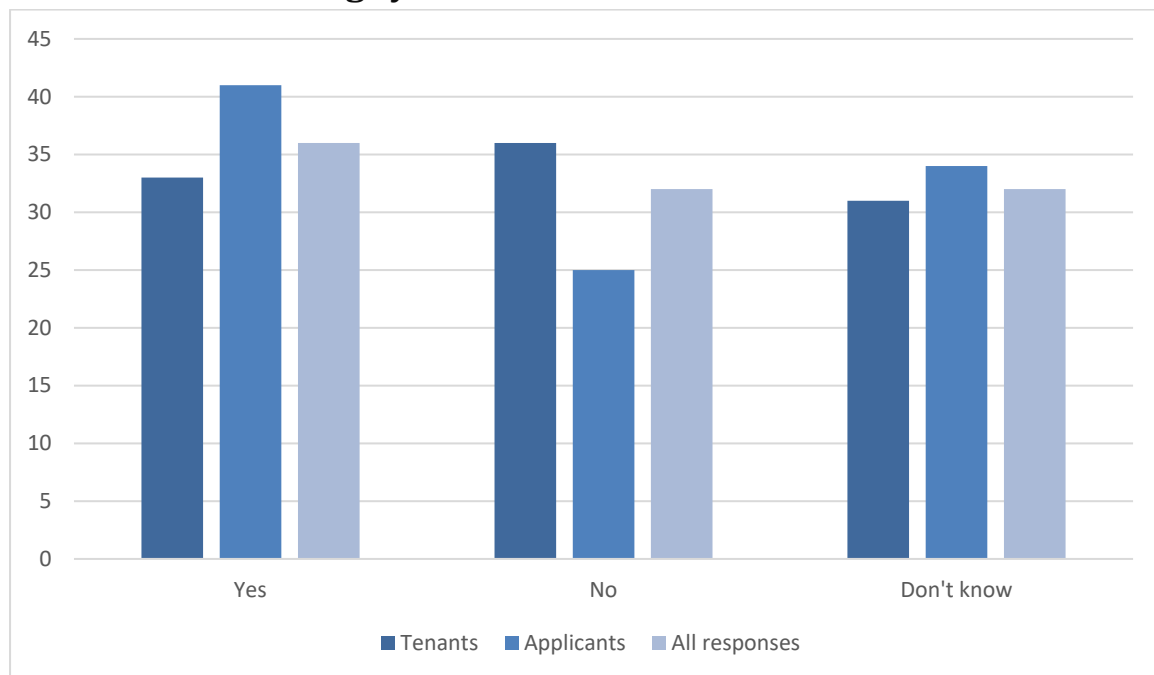
### **Chart 6A: Do you think the Council should change from the existing method of allocating a property to a Choice Based Letting system?**



When separated into tenant and applicant responses the results varied, as shown in Chart 6B below- 33% of tenants were in favour of the proposal whilst 41% of applicants agreed that Choice Based Letting should be introduced. It is important to note that 31%, 34% and 32% of tenants, applicants and all respondents respectively ticked 'don't know' - this could indicate that more detailed information is required on Choice Based Letting before a

definite decision can be made. The figures could also suggest that some respondents were confused about Choice Based Letting as all existing tenants have been allocated their tenancies via the existing allocation policy and may be unsure about a new, unknown system.

**Chart 6B: Tenant and applicant responses to whether the Council should change from the existing method of allocating a property to a Choice Based Letting system?**



Comments on Q6 and Choice Based Letting:

*'I do not think a bidding option would be fair for majority of people. It would put pressure on folk'*

*'Bidding on houses at least you feel a bit more involved in the process.'*

### Question 7

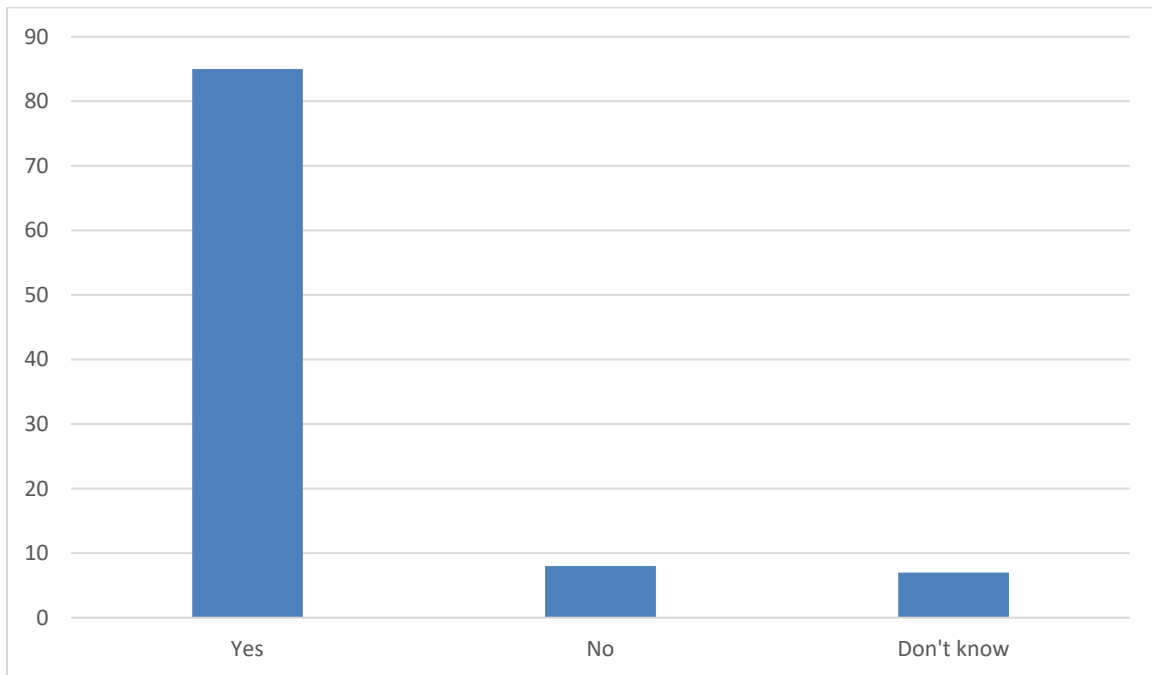
#### **Should additional priority be given to applicants who are resident in Midlothian?**

The vast majority of applicants on Midlothian's Housing List are resident within Midlothian. However, there are some applicants who are not resident in the area but choose to join Midlothian's Housing List. Currently residents are awarded 20 points. This could be increased to give greater priority to applicants resident in the area. Chart 7A shows the



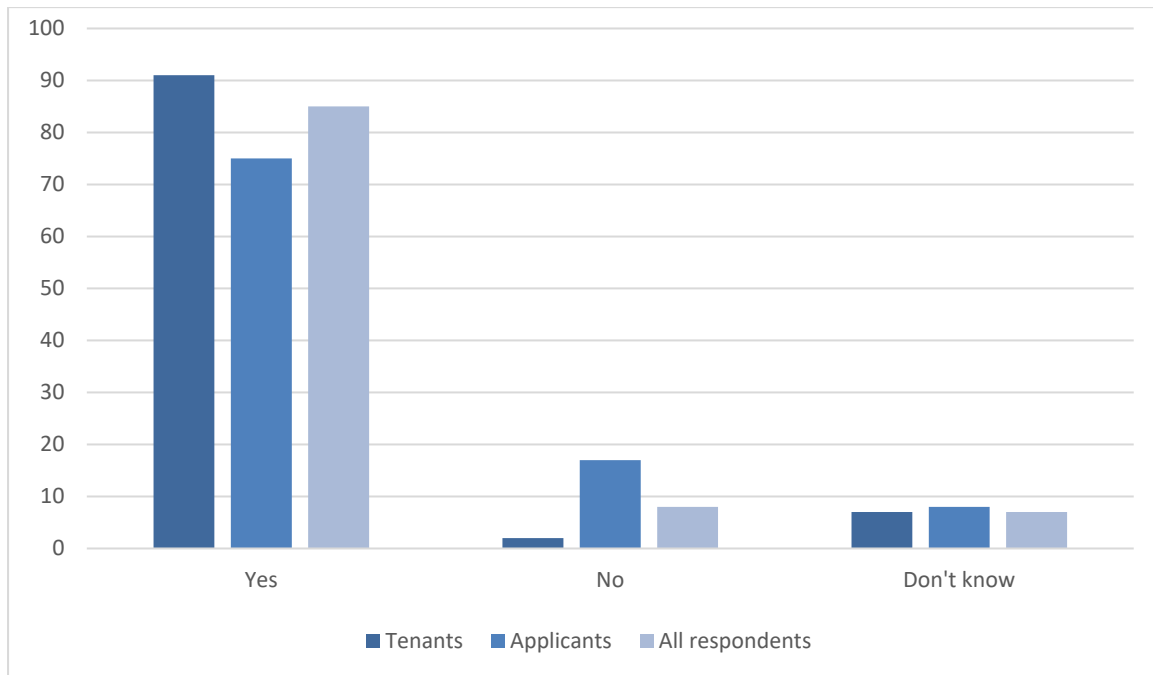
clear support for this proposal with 85% of respondents supporting it, 8% opting against it and 7% not sure.

**Chart 7A: Should additional priority be given to applicants who are resident in Midlothian?**



The support for this proposal varies when examined according to whether the respondents were tenants or applicants as shown in Graph 7B below – 91% of existing tenants supported this proposal compared to 75% of applicants.

**Chart 7B: Tenant and applicant responses to whether the Council should award additional priority points to applicants who are resident in Midlothian**



Comments received on Q7 and Midlothian residency:

*'incoming workers should not be penalised because they don't live in the area. Commuting becomes unaffordable once bills increase e.g. fuel, car and household bills.'*

'I think applicants who work locally should get more points, so I get to work on time as I have daughter and get no help'

'More points for people living in the same area as application'

## Section 2: Feedback from Midlothian Tenant Panel, Drop in Events and other Groups

Midlothian Council established the Midlothian Tenant Panel in 2015 to allow interested tenants to become more involved in scrutinising and engaging with the Housing Service. The Midlothian Tenant Panel provided face to face feedback on the Allocation Policy Consultation. In addition, local tenants and residents groups were welcome to meet with officers during the consultation period.

All 5 members of the tenant panel met with Housing staff prior to the consultation on the Housing Allocation Policy commented. The main points of feedback included:

Some panel members were supportive of the change in house size criteria as they felt it restricted choices and housing options for smaller households.

One member of panel felt that there should be an additional medical group as she and her husband required a transfer to a ground floor tenancy but he unfortunately passed away before they could be offered a suitable property.

There was mixed views about taking home ownership into account when allocating a house. Some applicants may have good reasons for requiring a council tenancy.

Anti-social behaviour was a big concern to one panel member who had neighbour problems for a prolonged period and welcomed the opportunity for the Council to use restrictive powers. Another member stated that they had never had a problem with an anti-social neighbour but would be terrified if this was to happen. One panel member said that an applicant with an antisocial behaviour record should be given a second chance and should not be denied a council house indefinitely.

### Some quotes from tenant panel members in relation to the Housing Allocation Policy:

“I understand that everyone needs a home, even for people who have been anti-social. I have never had a problem with an anti-social

“As someone who was homeless I understand how important the correct Housing Allocation Policy can be to people. I am hopeful that single people and couples could be considered for 1 bedroom housing as there are not that many houses of that size ”

On Ready to Rent: “I think it would be good to let more people bid, make it more of a free for all, and get some revenue from it.”

## **Cowan Court Tenants Group**

The Cowan Court Tenants Group met on 18<sup>th</sup> October and the Allocation Policy Review was discussed at the meeting. The following comments were made:

One tenant queried the cost of consultation. It was explained by a member of housing staff that it was important that the council consulted as widely as possible and provided with good quality information materials in order that the level of engagement was high.

One tenant felt that council properties should only be allocated to people who already live in that area i.e. properties in Penicuik should be allocated to people who live in Penicuik.

One tenant felt that owner occupiers should not be penalised on the housing waiting lists if they had medical needs.

One tenant felt that concerned that Syrian refugees might be housed before applicants who have been on the Midlothian Council Housing List for years.

## **Drop In Events**

Tenants and Prospective Tenants were welcome to attend one of three drop in events in Midlothian to talk to staff about the consultation materials, ask questions, and provide feedback in an informal environment.

Drop in Events were held in the following locations:

Penicuik Library, Tuesday 26/3/2019, 16:00–19:00

Gorebridge Library, Thursday 28/3/2019, 14:00 –16:00

Dalkeith Art Centre, Thursday 4/4/2019, 16:00 –18:00

Drop in events attracted a small number of attendees, with a total of 15. Comments in relation to the Housing Allocation Policy included:

Some attendees who were on the Housing List thought that new build housing was allocated only to existing tenants. They were pleased that this no longer occurred as a result of changes to the Policy in 2013.

Most Housing List applicants were happy that Ready to Rent was being used but felt it would not help them as they had chosen a limited number of areas and house types.

Some attendees noted they were sympathetic towards Syrian refugees but were concerned that this might affect the time spent waiting for housing for existing applicants.

One attendee who had specific housing needs noted they really liked Cowan Court and wished there was similar provision in their own area as they would not want to move away from their community where they had a support network of family and friends.

One tenant was concerned that they would be forced to downsize by Housing staff. They were reassured that this was not the case.

One applicant was aware that they were being very specific in the area and the type of housing that they wanted and recognised that this would have implications on the time taken to be rehoused. They felt the changes being proposed would not reduce the amount of time it would take for them to be allocated a property.

### **Section 3: Written feedback and comments**

As part of the consultation process for the Housing Allocation Policy Review, applicants were able to provide written feedback in addition to their survey comments. Of the 850 completed survey forms a total of 235 comments were provided. Some of the comments were similar and some comments were not related to the Housing Allocation Policy. Of the responses:

83 were positive

41 were negative

111 were neutral or not specifically related to the allocation policy review.

This section reviews the types of comments and suggestions that have been provided and, where applicable, provides a response or recommendation in the table in relation to the comment.

<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Individual Response</b>	<b>Council Response/Recommendation</b>
Removing the Choice Group – Positive	1. People in owned accommodation should have no priority over someone in rented, you can't expect a council house, it has to be needed	Noted - The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 allows the Council to consider the appropriateness of allocating housing to a homeowner.
	2. Should only be general group and have fairly equal chance of climbing list as anyone else. Only in severe cases of homelessness should get ahead, need to build more houses	Legislation requires Midlothian Council to assess each applicant on an individual basis.  For details on Midlothian Council's new build programme click here for the ' <a href="#">Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24</a> '
	3. I do think removing the choice list is a good idea.	Noted
<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Individual Response</b>	<b>Council Response/Recommendation</b>
Removing the Choice Group – Negative	4. Don't know what the choice group is or does	The Choice Group is comprised of applicants who have no identified housing need but would like a council tenancy, and also council tenants who are adequately housed but would like another house.
	5. I think waiting time points for people who been on 10 years should get more points. Taking choice away seems unfair to those who waited	Noted

Response Category	Individual Response	Council Response/Recommendation
	6. Not fair to remove choice group	Noted
	7. Concerned about going down to the list if there isn't a choice group.	If the council removes the Choice List all applicants would move onto the General Needs List and would still receive points, for example waiting time points and local resident points.



Response Category	Individual Response	Council Response/Recommendation
Update Incentive to Move Scheme - positive	8. I feel there are too many houses 3 & 4 bedrooms occupied by one person, whether young or old, I understand it's been their home but they should be encouraged to move	Noted
	9. More options for pensioners that could downsize free up a house for a family	Noted – A significant number of Midlothian Council extra care and amenity homes are planned. For details on Midlothian Council's new build programme click here for the <a href="#">Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24</a>
	10. Letter/volunteers to go out to encourage people to downsize when houses are too big, discounted removal company to help to move	Details of the Incentive to Move Scheme are sent annually to all tenants in the tenant newsletter. The £1500 Incentive to Move payment can be used to cover removal costs.
	11. More smaller bedroom properties should be built and incentives for under occupied and the elderly to move making room for families	Noted – see response to no.10.
	12. I live in a 3 bedroom house and I would move if you get help downsizing, I think more people would do the same	Please phone Midlothian Council to discuss further.
	13. Older people in big houses should downsize, priority for armed forces	Noted Currently HM Forces applicants who give 6 months' notice of discharge are awarded time points from date of enlistment and homeless points which usually ensures they are housed before they are discharged from HM Forces.

<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Individual Response</b>	<b>Council Response/Recommendation</b>
	14. Have something in place for people to swap other than online. More for older people that aren't tech savvy	Under crowded tenants can phone Midlothian Council who will help them to find a smaller tenancy. Tenants can also visit Buccleuch House reception and view the Mutual Exchange Folder which contains hard copy information.
	15. I am a single man in a 3 bedroom house. Why am I not being offered an incentive to move?	Details of the Incentive to Move Scheme are sent annually to all tenants in the tenant newsletter. Under crowded tenants can phone Midlothian Council who will help them to find a smaller tenancy.
<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Individual Response</b>	<b>Council Response/Recommendation</b>
Update Incentive to Move Scheme - negative	16. I think £1500 is too much to give people to move to smaller property	Noted
	17. I think people who are in larger houses that they don't need are made to downsize so bigger families can live comfortably.	Tenants have security of their tenancy as a Scottish Secure Tenant and Midlothian Council would not force a tenant to downsize.
	18. There is not enough 1 bedroom houses in Dalkeith for people wishing to downsize from 2 or 3 bedroom houses	Noted.  It is acknowledged that there are not enough smaller houses available to meet housing need. The need for smaller homes is reflected in the Council's Phase 2 of new development: in 2014/15, Midlothian Council completed 48 new council homes, 45 of which were 1 and 2 bedroom units.

Response Category	Individual Response	Council Response/Recommendation
Response Category	Individual Response	Council Response/Recommendation
Additional application points to under/over crowded households - positive	19. I believe more should be done to ensure that people are moved where they have boys and girls of age who are having to share.	30 points are awarded to applicants who are currently living in overcrowded conditions. The Allocation Policy allows two children of different sexes to share a room until ten years of age, after which overcrowding points are awarded.
	20. I believe that large families shouldn't be allocated houses that are small - couples with boy and girl should be priority for 3 beds to make more use of wasted space. Single folk shouldn't get 2 beds.	<p>The Allocation Policy allows two children of different sexes to share a double room until 10 years of age after which overcrowding points are awarded.</p> <p>Single people can apply for 1 or 2 bedroom homes.</p>

Response Category	Individual Response	Council Response/Recommendation
<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Individual Response</b>	<b>Council Response/Recommendation</b>
Additional application points to under/over crowded households - negative	<p>21. Why not let tenants who need/request one size up permission to convert a large loft as 2-3 bedroom is virtually impossible to get</p> <p>22. Overcrowding should not take into consideration any pregnancy as its person own choice. Homeless people have to be categorised as there are many reasons for being homeless</p>	<p>Midlothian Council cannot allow significant alterations to be made due to building safety standards.</p> <p>Legislation does not allow Midlothian Council to do this.</p> <p>Midlothian Council assesses each homeless applicant on an individual basis.</p>

Response Category	Individual Response	Council Response/Recommendation
Response Category	Individual Response	Council Response/Recommendation
Local Lettings Initiatives - positive	23. priority should be given to people already resident in area over people just moving to area	Noted

Response Category	Individual Response	Council Response/Recommendation
Local Lettings Initiatives - negative	24. should be no restrictions anywhere as more housing is going up all the time	Noted

--	--	--

Response Category	Individual Response	Council Response/Recommendation
Changes to support homeless households - positive	25. More points for homeless families with young children	Homeless applicants receive 97 points and are allocated 45% of our homes. Midlothian Council's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan aims to reduce the time it takes to rehouse people further.
	26. More houses for homeless	Noted. See response to no.25
	27. I cannot say more about the way you allocate but homeless people who waited a long time should get before people who have a house	Midlothian Council is required to assess each case individually and takes into account many factors including health, overcrowding, homelessness and harassment.
	28. Point 5 option B, to widen their choice within Midlothian, I agree but also to be given extra points for the long term homeless and maybe pay for pets in kennels while homeless.	Noted. Local Authorities are not required to provide kennels for homeless applicants' pets. Shelter can provide advice and guidance on organisations that can help.
	29. Modernise the system asap, if you're homeless, the priority is to get a house, any type, any area, anything more than that is aspirational, not need.	Noted

--	--	--

Response Category	Individual Response	Council Response/Recommendation
Changes to support homeless households - negative	30. Area choice should be kept as people who are ill with medical or mental health problems need to stay within support network	Noted – consideration could be given to asking applicants to choose a set number of areas instead of all areas.
	31. Families with children whether homeless or in private lets should be given priority, as children need secure accommodation, children are the future	As per the current Allocation Policy, tenants who access a private let are no longer classed as homeless and are placed on either the choice or general needs waiting list according to their individual circumstances.

Response Category	Individual Response	Council Response/Recommendation
Choice Based Lettings - positive	32. Advertise homes on a regular basis so applicants know what's available	Noted – landlords who use Choice Based Lettings advertise their available property list online or in local newspapers on a weekly or fortnightly basis
	33. Bidding on houses at least you feel a bit more involved in the process.	Noted
	34. Let people know when you have places up for rent	Noted – See response to no.33.

Response Category	Individual Response	Council Response/Recommendation
Choice Based Lettings - negative	35. I think that a move to choice based letting system could result in less popular properties being left empty for lengthy periods-which would be detrimental to housing policy	Currently any properties which are refused twice become 'Ready to Rent' properties – homes which are immediately available to the housing applicant who successfully 'bids' and is appropriate (in terms of the size of the property). We have on average two Ready to Rent properties per month. The 'Ready to Rent' scheme is similar to Choice Based Letting and it reduces void time.
	36. I do not think a bidding option would be fair for majority of people. It would put pressure on folk.	The Scottish Government endorses the use of Choice Based Letting as it allows applicants to view a list of available properties to let and bid on homes they are interested in with an applicant with the highest level of points being successful in bidding for a property. The allocation process is more open and maximises choice for the applicant.



	37. Forget Bid system keep housing list simple I want to move house I don't need extra work	Noted
	38. CBL is unfair as I've been bidding every week for 14 years and I'm still waiting on a move even though I'm overcrowded. Too many people apply for same area/house so less chance of getting moved. It's fairer doing the points system.	Last year Midlothian Council let 364 properties and there were 4649 applicants on the waiting lists. Supply doesn't meet demand. Choice Based Letting allows applicants more of a choice on the areas, streets, house types they are interested in – although these will obviously affect how long an applicant will wait until they have a successful bid. Choice Based Letting is also more convenient as it is online.

Response Category	Individual Response	Council Response/Recommendation
Residency points - positive	39. Priority should be given to the youngsters born in Midlothian once they marry etc. to keep them in Midlothian. Priority also given to homeless persons from Midlothian	Noted - Applicants who live in Midlothian currently receive 20 residency points.
	40. Priority should be given to people who were born and live in Midlothian	See response to no. 39.
	41. Allocations times can take years for genuine people and yet houses are found for others from other areas and countries. First come first served I think.	The vast majority of housing applicants and those who are allocated a property have a local connection to Midlothian. Applicants who live in Midlothian currently receive 20 residency points.
	42. If you were born in loanhead you get priority for loanhead, the council should go back to rent and rates that way everyone paid it!	Housing applicants can choose which areas of Midlothian they would like to live in – different areas and house types affect waiting times. In accordance with legislation Midlothian Council cannot take account of income when considering applicants for housing. Nor can Midlothian Council opt out of the national Council Tax scheme to revert to 'rent and rates'.
	43. I think also priority should be given to persons stayed here instead of asylum seekers, regardless of points etc.	Legislation specifies that asylum seekers are able to apply for housing. Homeless assessments are carried out on an individual basis.

	<p>44. Houses should be allocated to long term residents who are born and bred in Midlothian. Your policy where people from outside the area should be scrapped .i.e. Edinburgh council elevating to the top priority. If someone is on your list they should be housed in their preferred area after 5 years maximum.</p>	<p>Legislation prohibits allocations to only local residents. However, the vast majority of housing applicants and those who are allocated a property have a local connection to Midlothian.</p>
<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Individual Response</b>	<b>Council Response/Recommendation</b>
Residency points - negative	<p>45. The most in need should be housed first, regardless if local or not, we need more affordable housing built, thanks to all council staff</p>	Noted.
	<p>46. It should not give priority to people who are applicants or residents in Midlothian, it should be kept the way it is to all applicants.</p>	Noted.
	<p>47. Incoming workers should not be penalised because they don't live in the area. Commuting becomes unaffordable once bills increase e.g. fuel, car and household bills.</p>	Noted.

	48. Great help if council could look at the system for returning people that want to come back to Midlothian to be nearer relatives or work.	Anyone can complete a Midlothian Council application form, furthermore 10 points are awarded for local connection by employment in Midlothian.
--	--	--

Additional comments	49. I am pleased to see council are reviewing their policy and involving residents in their decision making. Grateful for my house of 7 years and had positive experience	Noted
	50. More allocation for disabled people and more disabled housing	Midlothian Council's phase 2 housing plans include the development of extra care properties. For details on Midlothian Council's new build programme click here for the <a href="#">Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24</a>
	51. I cannot understand why houses are allocated to young girls with children supposedly on their own "User" Spongers People not working , why not give to working people who work for a living, pay their taxes	Legislation does not allow us to take age or income into account when allocating housing. The Fraud Team will investigate undeclared changes and members of the public can call free of charge to report anonymously on 0800 854 440.
	52. I am very happy living in my flat, I have good neighbours. I believe the council are doing a good job under pressure ,ten out of ten	Noted

<p>53. More 2 bedroom amenity housing is a priority as needed for more young disabled people and families</p>	<p>For details on Midlothian Council's new build programme click here for the <a href="#">'Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24'</a></p>
<p>54. I really like the policy, delighted with my 4 bedroom I was allocated last year. Only bug bear I was placed in 4 places temp and upset the children to move so much, maybe get voids done quicker</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Midlothian Council is aware that the time taken to rehouse homeless people is too long. Midlothian Council's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan aims to reduce the time it takes to rehouse people.</p>
<p>55. Housing policy is a complete shambles, daughter waited year in private let and still waiting with her kids, you should give to working people willing to pay rent</p>	<p>Legislation does not allow us to take income into account when allocating housing.</p>
<p>56. Maybe more checks on new houses on gardens etc. council should introduce more property checks</p>	<p>Housing Officers carry out 'New Tenant Visits' approximately one month after tenants have moved in. Tenancy issues, including messy gardens can be reported to Midlothian Council.</p>
<p>57. Serving and veterans of forces should come first before everyone for housing needs, immigrants to be bottom especially if they have a house in a different country already.</p>	<p>Noted - Currently HM Forces applicants who give 6 months' notice of discharge are awarded time points from date of enlistment and homeless points which usually ensures they are housed before they are discharged from HM Forces.</p> <p>Legislation specifies that asylum seekers are able to apply for housing.</p>
<p>58. Build more homes for people in wheelchairs I'm on list for Pathhead</p>	<p>For details on Midlothian Council's new build programme click here for the <a href="#">'Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24'</a></p>

	59. Priority should be given to families who will actually pay the rent with at least one working person per household.	Legislation does not allow us to take income into account when allocating housing.
	60. Not enough checks taking place due to tenant sub-letting!	The Fraud Team will investigate undeclared changes and members of the public can call free of charge to report anonymously on 0800 854 440.
	61. Single young people have almost no chance of obtaining social rented housing due to low stocks and unmanageable waiting lists. Part ownership or building studio flats would help give young, single people more opportunity to live independently from their parents.	Noted. <a href="#">Details on the Open Market Shared Equity Scheme</a>  For details on Midlothian Council's new build programme click here for the ' <a href="#">Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24</a> '
	62. More housing for single people	See response to no. 62.
	63. I understand financial constraints but would like to see more council houses being built (I'm sure you would too)	Noted - For details on Midlothian Council's new build programme click here for the ' <a href="#">Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24</a> '

## **Conclusion**

The main points following the consultation period on the Housing Allocation Policy Review are as follows:

Midlothian Tenants and Prospective Tenants (housing applicants) responded well to the Survey, with less interest in attending face to face meetings.

The majority of tenants and applicants supported the following changes:

Allowing single people and couples to choose 2 bedroom properties.

Increased use of Ready to Rent category.

Using restrictive powers for applicants with a history of antisocial behaviour.

Taking into account whether an applicant is a homeowner.

Extra Needs Groups for future letting targets, with groups for households with medical needs, overcrowding, households in employment, armed forces applicants and those who want to move back to Midlothian who do not currently live in the area.

The most strongly supported changes were using restrictive powers for applicants with a history of antisocial behaviour and providing additional needs groups for lettings targets.

Those who attended face to face meetings were very supportive of enabling single people and couples to have the choice of 1 and 2 bedroom properties – however the Survey results indicated that while the majority of respondents did support this a significant proportion were opposed to this (28%) or unsure (13%).

Providing ways for enabling tenants and prospective tenants to be given feedback on the consultation and details of any changes the Council would assist in increasing the level satisfaction with tenant participation in Midlothian.