

Scrutiny Board (Neighbourhoods and Environment)

Inquiry into Housing Letting Pressures: Terms of Reference

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Scrutiny Board (Neighbourhoods and Environment) has agreed to undertake an inquiry into the Lettings policy set by the Council and the Choice Based Lettings system operated by the Council, the ALMOs and some RSL partners. Following a discussion with the Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing, it was agreed that a working group would meet to draw up draft terms of reference for this inquiry.
- 1.2 The working group consisted of Cllr Anderson and Cllr Gabriel. Following discussions, it was agreed that the inquiry should take into account factors that are wider than the Choice Based Lettings system. The working group was particularly interested in the links between issues around affordable housing, the pressures on council-provided housing and the lettings process in general, in addition to the workings of the Choice Based Lettings system.

2.0 Scope of the Inquiry

- 2.1 The purpose of the Inquiry is to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations on the following areas:
 - The legal requirements for provision of accommodation, including legally identified priorities and the Council's policy, including terminology used, such as that used for housing needs bands: 'priority extra' and 'priority'.
 - The impact of ward based demographic demands
 - Information supplied to Ward Councillors to assist in their advisory capacity and training issues
 - The Choice Based Lettings System and how this is audited and inspected
 - External criteria that put pressure on the Lettings policy and the Choice Based Lettings system; the causes and consequences
 - The direction of travel for the Lettings policy and the Choice Based Lettings scheme
 - Links with the private sector and Registered Social Landlords
 - The impact of ward based demographic demands
 - The role of housing advice and the presentation of housing options to customers

3.0 COMMENTS OF THE RELEVANT DIRECTOR AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER

3.1 In line with Scrutiny Board Procedure Rule 12.4 the views of the relevant Director and Executive Member have been sought and have been incorporated where appropriate into these Terms of Reference.

4.0 TIMETABLE FOR THE INQUIRY

4.1 The inquiry will take place over three sessions with a view to issuing a final report in February 2008.

4.2 The length of the inquiry is subject to change

5.0 SUBMISSION OF EVIDENCE

Timetable to be agreed

6.0 Witnesses

6.1 The suggested witnesses will be:

- Head of Strategic Landlord Group
- Housing Policy And Monitoring Manager
- Area Panels representative
- Almo Board Tenant representatives
- Government ministers for Housing and Yorkshire and Humber