

Scrutiny Board (Neighbourhoods and Housing)

Inquiry into Affordable Housing 2005/06 – Responses from the department

| Recommendation | Comment from department |
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| <p>RECOMMENDATION 1</p> <p>That the Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing takes forward the proposal to promote moves for people under occupying council tenancies, and also that possible management incentives for ALMOs to sensitively promote the policy are considered.</p> | <p>Following the debates held at the Scrutiny Board a revised Lettings Policy was implemented in April 06, setting out a number of incentives for customers living in council or Housing Association homes that are under occupying their home. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• awarding Priority Extra where appropriate,• greater promotion and support for those moving, from ALMO staff,• the ability for ALMO to consider making financial payments to assist such customers with the moving process. <p>In the Department's view, under occupation does not lend itself easily to be linked with a financial incentive to the ALMO's.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 2</p> <p>That mutual exchange marketing is further developed by the Strategic Landlord and ALMOs.</p> | <p>Mutual Exchanges are now advertised weekly in the Leeds Homes flyer, and on the Leeds Homes website. In addition Housing Associations advertise their mutual exchanges in this media.</p> <p>Further options will be examined.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 3</p> | |

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| <p>That the Neighbourhoods and Housing department encourage Registered Social Landlords to advertise their available properties through the choice based lettings scheme.</p> | <p>Leeds Federated HA and Unity HA advertise almost all their properties through the Leeds Homes choice based lettings scheme. In quarter 4 2005/6 116 Registered Social Landlord (RSL) properties were advertised.</p> <p>Officers of Strategic Landlord Group have begun meeting each RSL that operates in Leeds, to promote the council's choice based lettings scheme. Some RSLs are interested in advertising their stock in the near future, whilst others are sceptical of the merits of CBL for their business</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 4</p> <p>That the Neighbourhoods and Housing department develop stronger links with RSLs, particularly in establishing nomination agreements.</p> | <p>The Council has re-launched the need for nominations by developing both a new strategic and operational monitoring structure. Officers will now meet each RSL quarterly to discuss their nominations performance. As a result, nominations performance will be monitored by Housing Services Division.</p> <p>All RSLs are being asked to sign nominations agreements. To date 16 agreements have been signed covering 71% of RSL stock in the city</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 5</p> <p>That work is done to profile the housing register to establish average lengths of times for securing a house and to establish the sizes of households requiring housing.</p> | <p>Customer profiling of the housing register, those 'bidding' through the choice based lettings scheme and those let homes are currently undertaken on a monthly basis by ethnicity, age, household type and property size required.</p> <p>Work to profile the housing register to establish average lengths of time to be let a home will be completed by September.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 6</p> <p>That the Affordable Housing Task Group develops further affordable</p> | <p>The Affordable Housing Task Group is working to take forward pilot schemes to work in partnership with developers to increase the provision of affordable and low cost</p> |

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| <p>housing schemes in Leeds and takes note of key research findings and best practice being established nationally.</p> | <p>homes and to develop a homebuy scheme. The Group has contributed to and been informed by national research projects undertaken by BURA and Joseph Rowntree and visits to Greenwich Council awarded Beacon Council status and Reading Council to learn from their approach to the provision of affordable housing. Identifying and learning from good practice elsewhere will remain a key part of the work programme.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 7</p> <p>That clear criteria for access to affordable housing is developed for all schemes, which emphasise maintenance of local links and prioritise those who have been displaced through regeneration activities.</p> | <p>Criteria have been developed for the Gipton Low Cost Housing scheme which were previously circulated to Scrutiny Board and will provide a template for other schemes. These will emphasise the households' links to the locality and where households have been displaced through regeneration schemes prioritise these.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 8</p> <p>That a co-ordinated approach to marketing affordable housing is established to ensure that those who are eligible are given opportunity to benefit from the schemes.</p> | <p>A database is being established to record all those interested in low cost home ownership details of which will be passed to Housing Associations on completion of their affordable housing schemes. Links are also being developed with the 'Homezone' agent for West Yorkshire. The Homezone agent is responsible for the marketing of all low cost home ownership schemes which have been funded by the Housing Corporation.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 9</p> <p>That the appropriate Scrutiny Board receives a progress report back on the Golden Triangle Partnership</p> | <p>The Golden Triangle Partnership has successfully obtained funding from the Regional Housing Board (£7.5M over 5 years) in order to progress a homebuy initiative in areas of high value .</p> |

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| <p>RECOMMENDATION 10</p> <p>That the future target attached to BVPI 64 is sufficiently high to ensure that it drives continued improved performance.</p> | <p>BVPI 64 target for 06/07 has been increased from 800 to 1000. Additionally there are targets for maintaining the trend of reducing the number of long term private sector homes, with a target of 2.31% by march 2007</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 11</p> <p>That the department considers the future funding arrangements for the Empty Property Team.</p> | <p>The Empty Property Initiative will be regularly monitored to evaluate achievements and benefits during 2006/07, and subject to these findings funding requirements for the continuation of the team will be sought as a bid in the budget planning cycle which commences in late 2006 for future years.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 12</p> <p>That the department reports back to the appropriate Scrutiny Board on the Housing Market Assessment once this is complete.</p> | <p>The work to complete the Housing Market Assessment is scheduled to be completed in the Autumn 2006 and the key findings will be reported to the appropriate Scrutiny Boards.</p> |