

Population growth inquiry Children Services – Scrutiny board

Submission from Housing Services

The availability, timeliness and accuracy of local population change data (*how good is our information and how do we make it better?*)

Housing Services derives its customer information from:

The housing register

The council has 30,000 housing applications registered. 16,000 new applications are completed annually. In 09/10 there were 4,600 lettings made to council properties.

Housing Services undertake performance analysis of customer profile of housing applicants and of new tenants on a quarterly basis. This is based upon information supplied to a national database called Continuous Recording (CORE) and from our own analysis. CORE is a national database funded by the Tenants Services Authority (TSA). All local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in England are expected to complete a questionnaire giving both tenant and property information for all new lettings. TSA will be the regulator for council housing from April 2010 (subject to Parliamentary approval).

Housing Market Assessment

Local Authorities are required to undertake a housing market assessment to assess the housing requirements for their area. A full Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was undertaken in 2006 by consultants and the report was published in May 2007. In order that this information is up to date and relevant the Local Authority is in the process of commissioning a new Strategic Housing Market Assessment in order to give the Local Authority an up to date, detailed understanding of the housing market. This assessment needs to include the key drivers as well as supply and demand dynamics. The work will form a key part of the evidence base for the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) the Core Strategy and other Local Development Framework documents. It will also assist in the preparation of the Housing Strategy and other key housing policies and funding bids.

Customer Profiling

ALMOs and BITMO are gathering information data on age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability and religion for all tenants so that they may provide more bespoke services to them. Each ALMO has set its own targets aiming at 80 – 100% completion in 2009/10 for age, gender and ethnicity and 30- 40% for sexuality, disability and religion. Strategic landlord wants to work with ALMOs in 2010 so that ALMOs gather more information on employment/ training and household composition to assess under occupation/ overcrowding etc.

There has been a 20% increase in presentations at the Leeds Housing Options (from 25,000 in 2008/09 to a projected 30,000 in 2009/10) in the last year. It is believed that this increase in service demand can be significantly attributed to the economic position but population changes, such as refugee applications, increase in single person households and relationship breakdown will also be relevant factors.

The use that is made of available data in planning service provision (*how well do we use the information, and how can we improve?*)

Housing register and lettings data is used to illustrate the demand for an area. This is used to assess housing demand and shared with Planning when assessing planning applications and negotiations with developers to increase the amount of affordable housing (especially for s106 sites) for an area.

In addition, housing register and lettings data can be used to share with other directorates within the council. Although some teams in social care access the housing management computer system for operational work, insufficient use is made of reporting information. Adult / Children Social Care and Education Leeds should be able to access reports to support their services. For example, when a household with children move then Education Leeds should be able to use this information to update their records and check for school attendance

as well as welfare issues. Similar reports should be used to check against both Adult and Children Social Care databases. Such reports would also assist Education Leeds in planning movement of children for school place planning. Housing Services are introducing a new IT process by July 2010, whereby more personal information will be collected for customers in housing need. As a result it will be easier to send more detailed reports to Social Care on potential cases to match against their databases.

The reasons for population growth, and the consequent implications for services in terms of both universal services and also specific areas of additional demand (*what service changes do we need to make because of population growth?*)

Over the past decade the number of council lettings has significantly reduced, primarily due to the Right to buy, tenants living longer in their property, and the regeneration of estates. Lettings have been stable for the past 3 years at 4,500 per annum. The RSL sector (of 25 RSLs) has 15,000 homes in the city has provides about 1000 lettings. RSLs are expected to make at least 50% of their lettings to applicants from the council housing register. In 2009/10 the performance was 532 lettings.

Pressures on the social housing stock means that the Council will need to embrace opportunities to look at other housing options, especially within the private rented sector. The Council has established a Private Sector Lettings Scheme, through the Leeds Housing Options Service, and it is projected that in 2009/10 at least 720 households will have their housing needs resolved through a private rented letting.

As the number of lettings available in the social housing sector has been stable for the past 3 years, overall waiting times have very slightly reduced. Due to the waiting times for rehousing which are openly published and provided to all new applicants some customers may choose to find their own housing and thereby not apply to go on the housing register. Moreover, efforts are being made to encourage customers to be rehoused in the private rented sector (see below)

Service changes needed:

The last Strategic Housing Market Assessment indicated a requirement for 1889 affordable units to be provided for the next 15 years in order to meet the housing requirements of the City. The Affordable Housing Team are working along with partner organisations to meet these needs. A Strategic Affordable Housing Partnership Board has been established with the remit to increase the provision of affordable housing. The Board made 88 acres of council owned land available for affordable housing and as such has been able to attract significant grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency to enable people to rent or part buy new affordable homes.

The Leeds Housing Options envisages that around 1000 households will be able to resolve their housing difficulties through a private sector letting in 2010/11 – this is on the basis of current performance of between 75-85 lettings per month. A property shop, advertising available private rented properties, has been established at the Leeds Housing Options Service. The Leeds Housing Options Service has commenced writing to customers on the housing register advising that Private Sector Lettings Scheme could be an option to resolve their housing need; rather than waiting for an ALMO letting.

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