

Scrutiny Board (Neighbourhoods and Housing)

Inquiry into Affordable Housing 2005/06 – Monitoring of Recommendations

Recommendation	Comment from department
<p>RECOMMENDATION 1</p> <p>That the Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing takes forward the proposal to promote moves for people under occupying council properties, and also that possible management incentives for ALMOs to promote the policy sensitively are considered.</p>	<p>Following the debates held at the Scrutiny Board, a revised Lettings Policy was implemented in April 06. It sets out a number of incentives for customers living in council or Housing Association homes who are underoccupying their homes to move. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • awarding Priority Extra where appropriate; • greater promotion and support from ALMO staff for those moving; • allowing ALMOs to consider making financial payments to help customers move. <p>The department feels that it is difficult to make financial incentives to help ALMOs deal with underoccupation.</p> <p>The number of council tenants moving to smaller accommodation rose from 63 in 2004/5 to 175 in 2005/6. This increase is partly due to the introduction of the revised Lettings Policy, and partly to rehousing those displaced by clearance schemes. In these circumstances, many customers are let homes based upon their housing need, and rehoused in smaller properties.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 2</p> <p>That mutual exchange marketing is further developed by the Strategic Landlord and ALMOs.</p>	<p>Mutual Exchanges have been advertised weekly in the Leeds Homes flyer and on the Leeds Homes website since 2005. In addition, Housing Associations also advertise their mutual exchanges through Leeds Homes.</p> <p>Mutual Exchanges have increased from 22.2 per month in 05/6 to 25.7 per month in 06/7.</p>

<p>RECOMMENDATION 3</p> <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 quarters 1-3 of 2006/7, Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) advertised 131 properties . Negotiations are ongoing with 10 other RSLs to advertise their properties.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 4</p> <p>That the Neighbourhoods and Housing department develops stronger links with RSLs, particularly in establishing nomination agreements.</p>	<p>The Council re-launched the need for nominations in 2006 by developing new strategic and operational monitoring structures. Officers meet each RSL monthly to discuss their nominations performance. Strategic Landlord Group monitor this.</p> <p>All RSLs are expected to sign an agreement stating that they will let a minimum of 50% of their properties to council nominations. 19 RSLs have signed agreements, covering 85% of RSL stock in the city.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 5</p> <p>That a profile of the housing register is made to find the average length of time a customer waits for rehousing, and the sizes of households who need rehousing.</p>	<p>Strategic Landlord group can now give ALMOs the average length of time taken to rehouse customers by priority band, and homeless customers. This information will also be useful for customers, so that they can make informed decisions on where to bid for a home.</p> <p>In addition, reports are now available giving the average length of wait by ethnicity and age.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 6</p> <p>That the Affordable Housing Task Group develops further affordable</p>	<p>The Chief Housing Services Officer, on behalf of the Affordable Housing Task Group, submitted a report to Executive Board in November 2006. This gave details of the</p>

<p>housing schemes in Leeds, and takes note of key research findings and best practice being established nationally.</p>	<p>Affordable Housing Strategy, and the mechanisms that should be considered to deliver affordable housing in the public and private sectors.</p> <p>The Housing Market Assessment, including the needs assessment for affordable housing across the city (based on national guidelines set out by the Department of Communities and Local Government), is nearing completion. It was carried out under procurement rules by Outside UK. Since the last assessment in 2003, the need for affordable homes has increased on a year by year basis from 480 to 1889 units. These figures, together with the final report, have yet to be formally agreed. However, it is unlikely that the need figure will be lower than this, given the pressures on all sectors of the housing market.</p> <p>Research is also being carried out to understand why customers are increasingly seeing social housing as a route into the housing market. The research, which should be completed early in 2007, seeks to understand whether new groups of customers wish to be rehoused to social housing, or whether the increase in demand is due to a combination of reducing housing stock due to right to buy applications, and stock investment appraisals.</p> <p>Both the Assessment of Need and the research are fundamental to the Affordable Housing Delivery Plan that has been agreed by Executive Board.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 7</p> <p>That clear criteria for access to affordable housing is developed for all schemes, maintaining local links, and giving priority to those who have been displaced through regeneration schemes.</p>	<p>The Affordable Housing Delivery Plan that has been agreed by Executive Board set out a broad strategic framework to develop the criteria for access to affordable housing. Neighbourhoods and Housing and the Development Department are working closely to develop standardised section 106 agreements. They are also working to ensure that affordable housing requirements in new and existing planning applications are met in line with the Supplementary Planning Guidance, and that local needs are met.</p> <p>With the current pressures on social housing from decanting secure tenants and residents, work is ongoing with the Regeneration Partnerships Division of</p>

	Neighbourhoods and Housing to see how additional affordable housing, developed either by public or private sector funding, can assist with regeneration schemes and rehousing of those displaced.
<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>	The final report of the Housing Market Assessment will inform and advise on housing need across all tenures. Development Department and Neighbourhoods and Housing are working to ensure a co-ordinated approach towards the marketing of affordable housing. Neighbourhoods and Housing are also working closely with RSLs, who will be either managing or marketing properties, taking local requirements into account.
<p>RECOMMENDATION 9</p> <p>That the appropriate Scrutiny Board receives a progress report on the Golden Triangle Partnership</p>	A report on the activities of the Golden Triangle Partnership will be developed and reported to the appropriate scrutiny board in May 2007.
<p>RECOMMENDATION 10</p> <p>That the future target attached to BVPI 64 is high enough to ensure that it drives continued improved performance.</p>	The Empty Property Strategy has been revised and updated to cover the period 2006 – 2010, and stretched targets were incorporated and agreed at Executive Board on 15 th November 2006.
<p>RECOMMENDATION 11</p> <p>That the department considers future funding arrangements for the Empty Property Team.</p>	Environmental Health Services intend to apply for an extension of the NRF funding to support the Empty Property Team over 2007/08. They will submit a further bid for another EHO post to help with the high level enforcement actions that are required in

	<p>the existing target areas at Cross Green, East End Park, Harehills, Chapeltown, Beeston and Holbeck. Discussions have taken place with the Chief Regeneration Officer about relaxing the current boundaries the team are working in, so that they can work in the traditional student accommodation areas of Headingley, Hyde Park, Meanwood and Kirkstall, which are beginning to show signs of un sustainability in this particular niche of the housing market.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 12</p> <p>That the department reports to the appropriate Scrutiny Board on the Housing Market Assessment once this is complete.</p>	<p>A report on the outcome of the Housing Market Assessment will be reported to the appropriate scrutiny board in April 2007.</p>