

Inquiry into Housing Conditions: Scrutiny Board (Children and Young People) – Monitoring of Recommendations

Recommendation	Comment
<p>Recommendation 1 That the Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing urgently and vigorously pursues a more strategic approach to increasing and improving the supply of appropriate and affordable family accommodation across the rented and owned housing sectors.</p>	<p>The Chief Housing Services Officer on behalf of the Affordable Housing Task Group submitted a report to Executive Board in November 2006 detailing the affordable housing strategy and mechanisms that should be considered in order to maximise delivery of affordable housing within both the public and private sector.</p> <p>Both the assessment of need and the research are fundamental to the underpinning of the affordable Housing Delivery Plan that has been agreed by Executive Board.</p> <p>The Affordable Housing Delivery Plan that has been agreed by Executive Board set out a broad strategic framework in relation to developing criteria for access to affordable housing. Separate to this area, Neighbourhoods and Housing and the Development Department are working closely to develop standardised section 106 agreements and in relation to new and existing planning applications are working closely to ensure that affordable housing requirements are fully met in line with the Supplementary Planning Guidance and that local requirements in terms of management and meeting the needs of the local community are met.</p> <p>With the current pressures on social housing in terms of managing the decanting of secure tenants and residents, ongoing work is being undertaken with the Regeneration Partnerships Division of Neighbourhoods and Housing to see how additional affordable housing developed either by public or private sector funding can assist with the delivery of regeneration schemes and the re housing of those displaced.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2 That the Scrutiny Board (Thriving Communities) takes forward these issues and the monitoring of progress on our</p>	

<p>behalf.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 3 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>The number of council tenants moving to smaller accommodation rose from 63 in 2004/5 to 175 in 2005/6. Such an increase is in part attributable to the introduction of the revised policy, but also due to the lettings as a result of rehousing those displaced from clearance schemes. In such circumstances, many customers may be let homes based upon their housing need, and thereby rehoused in smaller properties.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4 That the Directors of Neighbourhoods and Housing and Children’s Services consider the introduction of a protocol for tracking children and young people who are part of a family that is evicted from or judged unsuitable for a council tenancy, and/or is assessed as homeless.</p>	<p>Families found unsuitable to be a council tenant consist of 17%, (112) of all applicants found to be unsuitable. Strategic Landlord Group revised the Lettings Policy including the Suitability procedure in 2006. As a result, ALMOs are now expected to review all cases that are unsuitable on an annual basis. Part of this review is to signpost or support the family so that they may be considered as suitable again.</p> <p>In January 2007 Executive Board approved the implementation of the Family Intervention Scheme (FIP). The Government expect Leeds to implement this as part of being a Respect Action Area. FIP will enable 5 – 6 households who have been evicted of ASB from a council or housing association home to be rehoused with a huge amount of additional support. The tenancy will only be granted on a condition that the tenant agrees to the additional support, and amend their behaviour. Should there be a breach of the tenancy agreement, or the support agreement then enforcement action will be sought, which will lead to eviction.</p>

	<p>There were 141 families found intentionally homeless in 05/06 . In line with the requirements of the Housing Act 2004 permission is sought from these families to refer them to Social Service to ensure that if applicable support is provided. All such vulnerable families will be referred to supported housing projects and where applicable to the Children in Vulnerable accommodation (CHIVA) project and are supported by them. This project is jointly funded by Education Leeds, Social Services and Children Services.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5 That the Directors of Neighbourhoods and Housing and Children’s Services consider further action which could be taken, in relation to housing, to protect continued parental contact in line with court decisions about the best interests of children and young people whose parents have split up, and review the allocation policy as appropriate.</p>	<p>The Lettings policy states that the council make individual assessments of the size of property based upon the information given by both parents when there has been a relationship breakdown. Therefore in high demand areas preference for larger properties will be given to customers with full time access to children.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6 That the Director of Development, in consultation with the Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing, develops a comprehensive and systematic strategy aimed at ensuring that the need for affordable family accommodation is an integral consideration in the department’s working, especially in relation to the planning and development functions, and ensures that wherever possible an adequate number of affordable homes is included in, or</p>	<p>Previous comments</p> <p>(The Scrutiny Board report recognises legislative restrictions in this area (para 3.3). Current national guidance is set out in Circular 6/98 which states that the seeking of affordable housing as part of development schemes, decisions about what types of housing to be provided should reflect local housing need as demonstrated by a rigorous and realistic assessment of local need (para 15). Draft PPS3 states that sub-regional housing market assessments should help determine whether affordable housing is needed and guide the level, size, type and location of affordable housing (para 23). So, planning policy and practice for seeking affordable housing cannot insist upon provision of family housing without a demonstrable need for such accommodation. Current local policy, Supplementary Planning Guidance Number 3 (SPG3), states that the mix of types/sizes of affordable housing should be informed by housing need information, but</p>

<p>funded via, all major housing developments prior to applications for planning permission being submitted to Plans Panels.</p>	<p>that where information is not available, developments should provide a pro-rata mix of affordable dwellings to reflect the mix of dwellings proposed on the development as a whole (para 3.8). At present, the Housing Need Assessment carried out in 2003 has little detail about need for different sizes of affordable housing in different parts of Leeds. Nevertheless, the SPG Housing Need Annex (July 2005) states that in the Outer Areas & Outer Suburbs of Leeds there is a stronger need for family housing & flats of 2 bed minimum size. Also, the Department, in collaboration with N&H Dept, has commissioned a Housing Market Assessment which should provide better details of the sizes of affordable dwellings needed in different parts of Leeds. This will help inform new plans & policy documents prepared under the Local Development Framework (LDF) and the negotiations with developers on individual development schemes.</p> <p>An affordable housing working group which includes senior representatives from Neighbourhoods and Housing Dept has been established to develop a comprehensive strategy in relation to securing affordable housing from a variety of sources including via the planning system. Current arrangements are being reviewed and areas of improvement identified. A consistent and streamlined approach between housing and planning will be adopted to ensure that the appropriate type and tenure of affordable housing is requested on all major housing developments. It is also envisaged that a joint monitoring tool will be established to track and oversee the progress of the affordable units.)</p> <p>Updated Comments: PPS3 was introduced in November 2006, which cancelled previous guidance of Circular 6/98. Strategic Housing Market Assessments should help to determine whether affordable housing is needed and guide the level, size type and location of affordable housing. As previously reported, the Department has, in collaboration with N&H Dept, commissioned a Housing Market Assessment which should provide better details of the sizes of affordable dwellings needed in different parts of Leeds. The report should be available in March 2007. This will help inform new plans and policies in the Local Development Framework, as well as negotiations with developers on individual schemes. PPS3 states that "Proposals for affordable housing should reflect</p>
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the size and type of affordable housing required.” Our current planning policy guidance is contained in Supplementary Planning Guidance Number 3 (SPG3), which states that the mix of types/sizes of affordable housing should be informed by housing need information, but that where information is not available, developments should provide a pro-rata mix of affordable dwellings to reflect the mix of dwellings proposed on the development as a whole (para 3.8). The SPG Housing Need Annex (July 2005) states that in the Outer Areas and Outer Suburbs there is a stronger need for family housing and flats of 2 bed minimum size. The SPG refers to the old Circular 6/98 setting a threshold of applications for developments of 25 or more dwelling units requiring affordable housing. PPS3 suggests a minimum threshold of 15. This new threshold of 15 is therefore now being used in Leeds for all new applications.

An affordable housing working group which includes senior representatives from Neighbourhoods & Housing, Planning Services, Development Department and Asset Management, has been established to develop a comprehensive strategy in relation to securing affordable housing from a variety of sources including via the planning system. ‘Making the Housing Ladder Work – A Plan for Delivering Affordable Housing in Leeds 2007-2015’ (the affordable homes strategy) was produced earlier this year and has been presented by Paul Langford, Chief Housing Officer, to many groups, including plans panels and the DC Caseworkers meeting. Housing Officers are now attending all plans panels meetings and an Affordable Housing Proforma has been agreed to ensure developers are made aware of requirements for affordable housing early on in the application process. Further training of DC officers is to be given to separate DC Teams by Housing and Planning Policy officers. A consistent and streamlined approach between housing and planning is therefore being adopted to ensure that the appropriate type and tenure of affordable housing is requested on all major housing developments. It is also envisaged that a joint monitoring tool will be established to track and oversee the progress of the affordable units.