

CABINET MEMBER FOR SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS
6th February, 2012

Present:- Councillor McNeely (in the Chair); Councillors Goulty and Kaye (Policy Advisors).

J49. LOCALISM ACT 2011 - PROPOSED CHANGES TO SOCIAL HOUSING

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the Government proposals regarding social housing policy which were covered by the Localism Act.

The Localism Act 2011 was the principal Act to deliver the Government's commitment to devolve power to the lowest level enabling communities to make decisions as part of the big society.

The proposals concerning social housing policy were:-

Homelessness

Local authorities would be able to discharge their Homelessness Duty by providing accommodation in the private sector with a minimum 12 month, fixed term tenancy, without the applicant's agreement. The local authority would need to ensure that the offer was of good quality and suitable to the needs of the individual. However, if an applicant became unintentionally homeless and reapplied for accommodation within 2 years of accepting an offer in the private rented sector, the authority would still have a duty regardless of whether they had a priority need.

This was likely to increase the number of Council properties available for letting to other housing register applicants.

Allocations

Provided the option to set criteria to determine who qualified for acceptance onto the housing register. Currently Rotherham operated an 'open' register which accepted all applicants regardless of personal circumstances/need.

Tenure Reform

'Lifetime' tenancies of existing social housing tenants would continue but there would be an option for local authorities to issue minimum 2 year fixed term tenancies for new lettings.

The Council would need to develop and adopt a Tenancy Strategy setting out the matters to which all registered providers of social housing in the area should have regard when formulating their tenancy policies.

Succession Rights

Each tenancy would only succeed once. For all new tenancies, the spouse or partner would have an automatic legal right to succeed as long as the named tenant was not a successor.

The statutory right of succession for other relatives and carers was to be abolished. However, if the Tenancy Agreement contained an 'express term of the tenancy', provision could be made for a person other than a spouse or a civil partner of the tenant to succeed. Landlords may also include additional

succession rights. This would not affect existing secure tenancies.

This would result in a greater turn over of tenancies and further opportunities for those on the housing register.

Mobility of Social Housing Tenants

The Act sought to facilitate the movement of social housing tenants.

The Authority subscribed to the Home Swap database which allowed tenants to link with other social housing tenants who were looking to move house free of charge.

Housing Revenue Account Reform

The self-financing system would allow local authorities to retain rental income in exchange for accepting a proportion of the national housing debt. This would be determined by calculating estimated income and expenditure for each local authority and their ability to deliver the housing services required and manage the debt.

It was noted that 3 further Member Development sessions were to take place in March, 2012 on elements of the Act which gave local authorities options to implement changes.

Resolved:- (1) That the range of proposals which may affect the Council's social housing be noted.

(2) That the course of action towards implementation including consultation, workshops, member seminars and further reports be approved.

(3) That emphasis be drawn to the importance of the Member Development sessions to capture Members' views on the options available.

J50. NEIGHBOURHOODS GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2012-13

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods Services, presented a report which detailed the projected year end outturn position as at 31st December, 2011, for the Neighbourhoods department within the Neighbourhoods and Adult Services Directorate compared to the approved Net Revenue Budget.

The latest position was a projected underspend of £294,000 by the end of March, 2012.

Most services areas were projecting underspends or balanced budgets by the year end :-

Housing Access	£11,000 underspend
Housing Choices	£88,000 underspend
Safer Neighbourhoods	£169,000 underspend
Business and Regulation	£25,000 overspend
Neighbourhood Partnerships	£1,000 underspend
Neighbourhood Investment	Balanced

To date there was no spend on either Agency or Consultancy within Neighbourhoods. Actual expenditure to the end of December, 2011 on non-contractual overtime for Neighbourhood Services was £7,154.

Resolved:- That the report be received and noted.

J51. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved:- That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in those paragraphs, indicated below, of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

J52. PETITION - CLIFTON MOUNT

It was reported that a petition had been received, containing 20 signatures, from residents of Clifton Mount regarding anti-social behaviour.

Resolved:- (1) That the petition be noted.

(2) That the issues raised therein be investigated and a further report submitted in due course.

[Exempt under Paragraph 2 of the Act - information likely to reveal the identity of an individual]

J53. 12-14 RIDGEWAY

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services reported on an expression of interest by NHS Rotherham to purchase the above property to enable them extend and improve their facilities.

The report set out 3 options for the future use of the property:-

Option 1	Disposal to NHS Rotherham
Option 2	Continued to lease to NHS Rotherham
Option 3	Terminate lease, convert properties and re-let as housing units

Resident consultation had not been undertaken as the properties were already used as a medical centre and would continue to be used for this purpose.

The Ward Members had been consulted and were supportive of Option 1.

Resolved:- (1) That Option 1 (disposal to NHS Rotherham) be approved.

(2) That the Interim Asset Manager be authorised to negotiate the disposal of Nos. 12-14 Ridgeway, East Herringthorpe, to NHS Rotherham subject to planning permission.

(3) That the Senior Manager, Legal and Electoral Services, complete the necessary documentation.

(4) That the Cabinet Member and Ward Members be informed when planning

permission for the works had been granted.

[Exempt under Paragraph 3 of the Act - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any person (including the Council)]

J54. NEIGHBOURHOOD OFFICES

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the future of Neighbourhood Offices following the withdrawal of cashiering services at Wath, Rawmarsh, Greasbrough and Kimberworth Park.

It had become apparent that customers were increasingly using other channels to access services. The customer access points in the Neighbourhood Offices were currently being staffed by Housing Champions who, as a result, were unable to spend time on estates, identifying and dealing with issues and supporting tenants.

The services access at Neighbourhood Offices by customers had considerably reduced and alternatives widely available.

Resolved:- (1) That consultation take place regarding future access arrangements for Housing Services.

(2) That a further report be submitted on the outcome of the consultation programme with proposals for service improvement in March, 2012.

(3) That the relevant Ward Members be kept up-to-date with the proposals.

[Exempt under Paragraph 3 of the Act - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any person (including the Council)]