

COUNCIL SEMINAR

Present:- Councillor Lelliott (in the Chair); Councillors The Mayor (Councillor M.Clark), Ellis, Evans, Hamilton, Johnston, McNeely, Pitchley, Read, Reeder, Sims, Smith, John Turner, Wyatt and Yasseen.

MAKING SAVINGS TO THE ADAPTATIONS BUDGET.

Dave Richmond, Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods, and Sandra Tolley, Housing Options Manager, were welcomed to the seminar by Councillor D. Lelliott, Advisory Cabinet Member.

Dave and Sandra tabled the report that presented Solutions 1 – 10 in respect to making savings to the adaptations budget.

Questions and discussion followed the presentation and the following areas were covered. Elected Members were invited to ask questions about each of the proposed savings suggestions following the explanation: -

Councillor McNeely asked about the widening of external and internal doors for wheelchair access. – Sandra confirmed that there were no changes to this; if it was needed the Council would do this.

Councillor Sims referred to section 7.3.3.17 that stated fixed-term tenancies would be for a maximum of 5 years. If during that time residents no-longer needed the adapted house, would they be helped and prioritised to downsize/move on? Answer: - Yes. The Service had consulted widely on the issue for larger properties a few years ago. Would offer newly-let properties for up to 18 years and renew if required. This was certainly a sensitive matter. We want people to feel that that is their home and be committed to it whilst also supporting some people in very ill health.

Councillor Sims asked about ramps and how these were important to lots of individuals in wheelchairs and who did not use a wheelchair. Would all of the relevant factors be considered? Answer – presently individuals could only apply for a ramp if they were a full-time essential wheel chair user and each case would be considered on an individual basis. The Council was reviewing the policy as it recognised there were circumstances where we need to be more flexible.

Councillor Ellis asked about bolt on extensions that could be removed when no longer needed. Did the test/pilot work? Can we do more of these as technology improved and the price came down? 7.3.7 referred to private major adaptations and complex adaptations. Did the Council have a preferred partner for this? Undertaking an individual tender for each job whilst aiming for completion in less than 2 months and the waiting list for Occupational Therapy Services assessment, before even

starting, would contribute weeks and weeks of delay. Design for Life Standards for all new builds. How has the Council gone on campaigning for higher level planning? Were we ensuring that contractors were paying the living wage?

Dave Richmond referred to the £40m of work per year and could not confirm that every subcontractor did this. The Council would expect them to, but could not give a guarantee. He agreed to check with the procurement policy.

Answer: - Relating to bolt on extensions, we looked into viability of physical costing and the cost to move. This came in at around £100k, this is an initial huge outlay of cost and would also include removing from one installing in another place. Compared to building a one bed-extension or a shower at around £22k. How many times in the bolt on extension's lifespan could we re-use it? Have to re-use 4 times to justify cost.

Councillor Wyatt referred to higher level strategies that needed to be considered if partners were serious about keeping people out of hospital, reducing dependency and out of care. This links into the joint HWB Strategy. What was the work with district nursing services?

Councillor Johnston explained how she was appalled to hear that someone had to be in a wheelchair before they could ask for a ramp. What about people with walking frames, Parkinsons Disease and so on and people using shopping trolleys. People experiencing these kinds of mobility issues was going to increase and not having a ramp would leave people at severe risk. This was worrying.

Councillor Yaseen asked whether any recoupment charges were applied to the estate on an individual's death? Were there any legal implications to consider? Dave Richmond explained that they were in the process of consulting legal on this. Expectation would be that charge would be in place for a maximum of 10 years applied as a sliding scale as time progressed. The situation with leaseholders would need to be considered.

Councillor Yaseen spoke about the importance of ensuring that vulnerable people fully understood the implications of what they signed.

Councillor Reeder asked where the adaptations would be funded from. Dave explained that it was a combination of the Better Care Fund, the Housing Revenue Account and Right to Buy monies.

Councillor Reeder was concerned that focus was on council house properties and she had not had long enough to read these papers as they had been tabled.

REPORT FOR INFORMATION - 09/06/15

Dave Richmond outlined the split between private and social housing. The Council expected those who could afford to do their own adaptations, private and public tenants, to do them.

It was agreed that an update would be provided following a six-month review.

5 REVIEW OF THE ALLOCATION AND DIRECT HOME POLICY.

Time had not allowed for the consideration of this issue, although it was touched up in the previous item. It was agreed that an informal Members' drop-in session would be arranged to cover these factors.