

Minutes of Health & Housing Committee

Meeting Date: Thursday, 21 March 2013 starting at 6.30pm
Present: Councillor S Hirst (Chairman)

Councillors:

S Bibby	L Rimmer
S Brunskill	M Robinson
B Hilton	C Ross
K Hind	N Walsh
E M H Ranson	

In attendance: Chief Executive, Housing Strategy Officer.

726 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors R Hargreaves, J Holgate and R Newmark.

727 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

728 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

729 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

730 APPROVAL OF HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY

Committee received an update report in relation to the proposed Allocations Policy and were asked for their comments on the consultation process.

Members were reminded that they had considered a report in November 2012. Since that time the following actions have been undertaken; the Allocations Policy had been discussed in detail with Ribble Valley Homes Policy Sub-Group. It had also consulted with other registered providers operating in the Ribble Valley and finally consultation with Ribble Valley Homes customers, both tenants and applicants.

In November 2012 there were a number of questions raised by Members and Ribble Valley Homes board members and it was agreed some consultation should be undertaken.

Consultation was undertaken on the following issues:

- Do we want to increase points for those under occupying and do we want to offer those points across all social tenancies?

Following on from the consultation it was proposed that points for under occupying were increased from their current levels and applied across all social housing provider tenancies.

- Consideration around local lettings policy.

Local connection would be determined in line with Section 106 local connection criteria for new development.

- What was the view in relation to those with sufficient financial resources to compete in the housing market?

It was agreed that the housing list would remain open to all those with capital over £100,000 or weekly net incomes of greater than £500 and would be asked to complete a detailed financial assessment before housing needs points could be awarded.

- Armed forces.

In line with the Localism Act reasonable preference would now been given to applicants who served in the Armed Forces within the last 5 years.

- Should we set a percentage for lets for those economically active?

It was proposed that up to 30% of general needs vacancies were offered to economically active households.

- Should we seek to have a common allocation policy across Ribble Valley?

It was not felt necessary as Ribble Valley Homes and Ribble Valley Borough Council already allocate approximately 75% of all other registered provider vacancies.

- Should we refuse applications from those who never receive an offer due to having low priority?

96% of all those consulted felt that the waiting list should remain open to all.

It was proposed to operate the new Allocations Policy with effect from 1 July 2013 and the policy would be programmed for consideration at the May committee cycle. Members then discussed the consultation process in some detail and in particular had some concerns around the issue of sufficient financial resources and how this would impact on waiting lists.

RESOLVED: That Committee refer the policy to the Strategic Housing Working Group with the comments of this Committee for detailed discussion prior to reporting back to this Committee in the next cycle of meetings.

731 ALTERATIONS TO LANDLORD TENANT GRANT POLICY

Committee considered a report aimed at changing the landlord and tenant grant policy with a view to encouraging landlords to develop single flats for tenants under 35 years old.

Part of the Welfare Reform measures had capped the maximum amount a young person under 35 years could claim in housing benefit. This has had a significant impact on the housing options available for up to 35 year olds as there is limited private rented one bed accommodation that is affordable in the borough.

The proposal was to increase the amount of grant available to £15,000 per unit on the condition that the landlord would accept the lower monthly rent of £231.

Members then discussed this matter in some detail.

RESOLVED: That

1. Committee accepts the proposed changes to the landlord tenant grant scheme and allows an increased grant level for landlords willing to develop one bed accommodation where they accept the single room rate;
2. the increased grant amount to be available from April 2013; and
3. the lower rate will still be available for landlords developing two bed flats.

732 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2013-2014

Committee were informed of the new schemes which had been approved for inclusion in the capital programme for Committee for the forthcoming financial year 2013-2014. These were as set out below:

- Clitheroe Cemetery installation of infrastructure - £84,000
- Environmental Health replacement of pest control vehicle - £11,000
- Purchase and repair scheme - £45,000
- Landlord/tenant grants - £75,000
- Disabled facilities grants - £193,330
- Repossession prevention fund - £33,290

giving a grand total of £441,620.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

733 MINUTES OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING PARTNERSHIP WORKING GROUP

Councillor Hilton apologised for the fact that the minutes were not available for circulation. She did, however, summarise what had taken place at the last meeting:

- Presentation on dementia by Dr Wil MacKean.
- Dementia friendly communities.
- Partnership issues.
- Shadow Health and Wellbeing Boards.
- Health Watch Lancashire.
- East Lancashire Hospital Trust and the prominence of higher than expected levels of deaths.

She also reminded everyone about the health and wellbeing workshop which would be held on Tuesday, 26 March 2013 in Ribble Valley Town Hall and encouraged Councillors to attend.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Hilton be thanked for her verbal report.

734 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That by virtue of the fact that the following items of business be an Exempt Information Under Categories 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.

735 GENERAL REPORT – GRANTS

The Chief Executive submitted details of 10 disabled facilities grants that had been approved.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

736 AFFORDABLE HOUSING UPDATE

The Chairman commented favourably upon the recent Housing Forum which was growing in popularity and influence and thanked the Housing Strategy Officer for her efforts in organising this event.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.16pm.

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact Marshal Scott (414400).