

Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Housing Allocations Policy

Thursday, 5 February 2009

Present: Councillor Mike Devaney (Chair) and Councillors Julia Berry, Alistair Bradley, Kevin Joyce, Roy Lees, Marion Lowe, June Molyneaux, Rosie Russell and Stella Walsh

Also in attendance: Zoe Whiteside (Strategic Housing Manager) and Ruth Hawes (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

09.06 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillors Pat Haughton and Harold Heaton.

09.07 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2009 were confirmed as a correct record.

09.08 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No Members declared an interest in respect of items on the agenda.

09.09 INFORMATION REQUESTED AT THE LAST MEETING

Officers reported that some consultation had been received, but that all partners had not yet responded. Two focus groups would be held next week, one for Registered Social Landlords and one for tenants. The full consultation response would be fed into the report to the Executive Cabinet.

Officers advised that the new policy offered greater clarity and covered all aspects of the legislation and assured Members that due to "reasonable preference" no customers would be disadvantaged.

It was noted that the Chorley system would be cross tenure, covering social housing and private rented. South Ribble and Preston were currently reviewing their policies.

Members discussed customers who were currently in housing and would like to move to another area. Officers advised there was a need to have a balanced community and that aspects of allocation were governed by legislation. The suggestion would be taken forward.

In response to a query officers confirmed that assistance was given to customers to complete forms, home visits were also offered. In particular this was important for older and vulnerable people.

Officers confirmed that a person could end the duty owed to them by the Council through their behaviour, e.g. if they caused problems in Cotswold House.

A rent arrears protocol was being introducing where a Registered Social Landlord would notify the Council of a potential for eviction due to rent arrears, meaning the issue would be highlighted earlier and hopefully prevent families becoming homeless.

Members considered income levels for allocation purposes and noted a level would be set on savings in the future.

RESOLVED – The information be noted and comments taken forward.

09.10 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Members received the glossary of terms and requested clarification on several terms.

RESOLVED – The glossary of terms be noted.

09.11 CONSIDERATION OF THE ALLOCATIONS POLICY

Officers confirmed that once the consultation finished the document would be amended and presented to the Executive Cabinet for approval. Overview and Scrutiny would have the opportunity to review the policy again at this point.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Overview and Scrutiny that:

- a. Existing tenants could benefit from a mechanism to transfer to a house that became available in another location and subject to ensuring the policy complies with the law officers will develop a mechanism for transfers.**
- b. A system should be devised to preclude customers with a certain level of savings and or capital assets from housing allocation to ensure more deserving customers are not disadvantaged.**

09.12 THE WAY FORWARD

The report of the Task Group would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee later in the month.

Chair