

Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Select Move

Thursday, 19 September 2013

Present: Councillor Graham Dunn (Chair), and Councillors Hasina Khan, Paul Leadbetter, June Molyneaux and Paul Walmsley

Also in attendance

Councillors: Councillors Steve Holgate

Officers: Gary Hall (Chief Executive), Zoe Whiteside (Head of Housing), Michael Coogan (Strategic Housing Officer), Stuart Dewhurst (Housing Options Team Leader) and Dianne Scambler (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

13.SM.5 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alison Hansford and Steve Murfitt.

13.SM.6 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Select Move meeting held on 18 July 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

13.SM.7 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of any interests.

13.SM.8 PRESENTATION OF STATISTICAL INFORMATION

A statistical breakdown of those people registered on the Select Move lettings scheme was provided the Group with information relating to the following characteristics:

- Ethnic origin of household
- Faith of main applicant
- Sexuality of main applicant
- Gender of Main and Sole Applicant
- Rural Households
- Ages of Oldest Joint Applicant by Household size
- Member of the Household Pregnant
- Member of Household has Disability

Information was also provided on who has been on Select Move the longest. Members noted with interest that 274 (18%) applicants had been on the list for over two years, and that 111 of that number were in the Over 55 group.

Further analysis of this information revealed a variety of differing reasons as to why applicants could be registered for over two years revealed the following:

- a higher proportion of one bed need 59% to compared to 54% in general
- a higher proportion of Band E applicants, 47% compared to £42% in general
- Lower number of bids per year with 8.8 compared to 11.4 in general

Even though, these reasons all contributed, the difference weren't considered highly significant.

Looking at the 20 applicants registered the longest, 12 were banded E, 6 banded D and 2 banded B (banding had changed recently and one in process of being housed)

It was also identified that three of these applicants had never placed a bid. However Members were informed that just over one third of the whole of the register 34.4% have never placed a bid.

Some applicants showed a repeated pattern of bidding and then turning an allocated property down.

The majority 9/10 oldest registered applicants were managed by New Progress Housing Association.

Other reasons included refusing properties, street specific, bidding on new builds mainly, bidding on properties with more beds than needed and sheltered when not needed. Rent arrears had been a barrier on one occasion as a payment plan with the current Registered Provider had not been kept up. Again the reasons differed but they were mainly due to a lack of bids on appropriate properties.

It was explained that all the applicants were contacted every year to see if they wanted to remain on the list. If they expressed a wish to remain on they did, even if they had placed no bids. Members wondered if the renewal policy needed to be reviewed and be more robust.

The Group were very concerned about those people who chose to stay on the list for a number of years, but were not bidding. It was explained that anecdotal evidence suggested a number of differing reasons that included applicants been extremely selective about the type or area of property they wished to locate too.

Whilst undertaking this exercise the following main issues were highlighted as potential areas of concern that needed to be looked into further.

There was an under-representation of rural households on Select Move. A Rural Housing Needs Survey carried out in 2011 had already identified a lack of rural housing supply and the Council were trying to negotiate with developers to build as many affordable housing properties in those areas as they could.

There were disproportionately a high number of older households on Select Move for over two years. This was put down to a variety of reasons that included:

- The need was usually for a one bed, with two beds often being wanted.
- Can be street or house specific

24.6% of this group were owner occupiers compared to a total of 8.5%

82.3% of over 50's own their own home with 57.5% having no mortgage

44.7% were banded E

Low numbers of bids per household, 11.4 per year pro rata, with 34.4% of the total applicants never having bid. Management of applicants and renewals may need to be looked into further.

Under the old system, before the Council joined Select Move, CORE data indicated that the Council managed 173 lettings via nomination in 2002/13 and 109 on 2010/11. It was supposed to be around 50% of all nominations but was actually around 5%.

Since using the Choice Based Lettings through the Select Move Partnership the Council has seen an enormous increase in properties let subject to Chorley Council's adopted policy, with 405 let's managed in 2011/12 and 561 in 2012/13. This increased transparency in lettings in the borough.

The net inward migration was 10.4% in 2011/12 and 7.8% in 2012/13. This was considered to be a problem and measures have since been taken to address this situation with a new allocations policy that will assist households with a local connection to the borough access to a Chorley property.

The Chair, gave his thanks on behalf of the Group to Mick Coogan, Principal Strategic Housing Officer for all his hard work in producing the statistical information and analysis that was presented at the meeting.

A number of areas had been highlighted that warranted further investigation to address any areas of concern. The housing team were using this information to inform

them as to the type of affordable housing builds that need to be developed across the borough in order to meet both need and demand. Members still considered that the presentation of the properties being let by the registered providers was an area that needed to be addressed.

13.SM.9 EVALUATION OF THE PREVIOUS SELECT MOVE SURVEY

The partnership had agreed to undertake a customer survey satisfaction in July 2012 to understand what customers felt about the service and to inform future developments. The timing of the survey was 16 months after Chorley had joined the scheme.

The survey was a postal one with prepaid envelopes included with the questionnaire, along with a letter explaining the purpose of the survey and offering assistance for those who may have required help in completing it or needed the form to be provided in an alternative format. Approximately 1200 surveys were posted out in Chorley, with only 102 being returned. This suggests an approximate return rate of 8.5%.

The questions asked were about the processes of the Select Move System, whether the applicant felt that they had enough information at different stages and use of the system.

Overall dissatisfaction with Select Move was at 20.9%, which Members considered to be a high minority figure and was potentially supporting the fact as to why some applicants did not bid often if at all. However this needed to be compared against a low percentage return, there was a feeling that people satisfied with the system may not necessarily respond.

It was AGREED that any future survey needed to capture responses from those applicants that had completed the process and had actually taken up a let on the system.

There was an option to request feedback from applicants at renewal stage as this was something that needed to be returned in order to stay on the scheme. An incentive of a prize draw was also considered as a way of gaining a high response.

A number of comments had been made on the previous survey that had been difficult to quantify and members asked if these could be evaluated see if any patterns could be identified as to why applicants were dissatisfied with the service and in what way.

The Group AGREED to an online survey to be distributed to all applicants on the waiting list and those that had been recently let. Officers would look at offering other alternatives to those people who did not have access to online facilities.

13.SM.10 FORMULATION OF QUESTIONS FOR THE REGISTERED PROVIDERS

The Group started to formulate a set of questions that would be asked of the Registered Providers that were to be invited to the next meeting.

Using the suggestions of the Members and in consultation with officers, it was AGREED that an appropriate set of questions would be identified and circulated to the Group for approval.

Chair