

Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Select Move

Thursday, 27 March 2014

Present: Councillor Graham Dunn (Chair), Councillor Hasina Khan (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Paul Leadbetter, June Molyneaux and Steve Murfitt

Also in attendance

Councillors: Councillors

Officers: Michael Coogan (Strategic Housing Officer), Zoe Whiteside (Head of Housing) and Dianne Scambler (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

14.SM.27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alison Hansford and Paul Walmsley.

14.SM.28 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Select Move meeting held on 26 February 2014 be held as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

14.SM.29 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of any interests.

14.SM.30 DRAFT FINAL REPORT OF THE SELECT MOVE REVIEW

The Chair, Councillor Graham Dunn presented the draft final report of the Select Move Review. The report gave some background to the purpose of the review and outlined the methods of investigation that the Task Group had undertaken.

The Group had undertaken a review of the Select Move Choice Based Lettings scheme after concerns had been raised about its accessibility and user-friendliness of the system. There was also a perception that people from outside the borough and without a local connection were accessing properties in Chorley.

The findings have been mainly positive and Select Move has demonstrated that it is fit for purpose and an effective way for a number of partners over a sub-regional footprint, to work collaboratively to allocate social housing.

However, it was still felt that there was a need for some important improvements which could be made to the scheme, including ensuring necessary safeguards for those who are not equipped to access digital services and improving customer care.

The Group agreed for the following recommendations to be considered by the Executive Cabinet:

- 1. That there continues to be regular monitoring by the Council of the level of net migration into Chorley, to ensure the new policy**

- achieves the overall aims of prioritising Chorley properties for those with a connection to the Borough.
2. That each Registered Provider review their processes for handing over properties at re-let stage, including both recording the time taken to prepare a property ready for let and also the level of assistance for new tenants. That all Registered Providers look to raise their offer to the same standard across all providers.
 3. That each Registered Provider reviews the provision for a decoration allowance for new tenants and review its levels, increasing it to ensure it where necessary to ensure it is sufficient.
 4. That the partnership consider the provision of surgeries or drop in sessions for customers to allow face to face support and demonstrations of how to perform certain tasks on the Select Move system.
 5. That any provision for surgeries or drop in sessions include the rural areas and are promoted to ensure that older people are aware of them and able to attend,
 6. That the partnership considers undertaking a process of proactive marketing to those who are not bidding regularly and offer to provide assistance. This should include promotion of any drop in sessions, mailing out of the newsletter and assisting bidding on properties by proxy.
 7. That the Registered Providers within the partnership are encouraged to provide more details in their property adverts, including detail of any specific local connection provisions (for example in rural villages) and also the provision of photographs on the majority of adverts.
 8. That the partners continue to work collaboratively to develop a data base of adapted properties which will ensure that when an adapted property becomes available, it can be advertised with all the relevant information to ensure that it is appropriately allocated.
 9. That the Registered Providers within the partnership endeavour to include any properties which are direct matched, on the Select Move system, clearly specifying it is not available for other applicants, in order to enhance transparency and integrity in the scheme.
 10. That the partnership lobbies Abritas to implement a new system upgrade in order to improve the customer interface.
 11. That the partnership ensures that any affordability policies or tests are consistent across Registered Providers and that these policies do not wholly exclude groups of customers.

The Group also agreed for a further two recommendations to be implemented as follows:

That the partnership amends the banding notification letter to include confirmation as to the evidence on which the banding is based,

That the partnership recognise the importance of treating social housing customers with dignity and respect and that customer service standards are of utmost priority.

The final report of the Task Group would be submitted to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April for approval.

The Chair thanked the Task Group Members for their deliberations, the officers and external representatives and the residents of Chorley who made a valuable contribution to this report.

Chair