

Minutes of **Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Select Move 2021**

Meeting date **Tuesday, 15 March 2022**

Committee Members present: Sarah Ainsworth (Vice-Chair in the Chair) and Councillors and Kim Snape

Committee Members present virtually (non-voting): Councillors Hasina Khan

Officers: Jennifer Mullin (Director of Communities), Rachel Stewart (Housing Solutions Manager) and Matthew Pawlyszyn (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

Apologies: Councillor Steve Holgate, June Molyneaux and James Nevett

15 Minutes of Meeting Tuesday, 15 February 2022 of Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Select Move

Decision: The minutes were approved as a correct record.

16 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

17 Discussion with Representatives from Housing Partners

The Task Group welcomed Ivan Wright and Dean Wall from Jigsaw Homes and Stephen Spencer from Progress.

It was understood that different responsible partners had slightly different time scales to turn around a property. Jigsaw had a target of 24 days, and Progress was 23 days for general needs and 25 days for independent living. The aim was to allocate properties as quickly as possible, although Covid precautions and cleaning had increased the time required.

Progress had struggled with Covid to ensure that conditions of the property were up to standard before being occupied.

The average void length in the current partnership was 24 days. The time often varied; however, improvements had been noted as the year progressed.

In response to noted concerns with time taken to fill empty properties and banding changes, both Progress and Jigsaw stated that there was no pressure on users to bid on properties. Users were reviewed every 12 months and any changes of circumstances or need would be updated. If a user were inactive for more than 12 months, they would be contacted and if appropriate, their banding would change.

Each member of Select Move had the same definition for 'local connection', as well as the same policies of assessment. The majority of properties let in Chorley, were let to Chorley residents, or to those with a connection to Chorley.

For those that lacked digital access, Jigsaw provided extra support, although there was no office located in Chorley, home visits would be made to those that were struggling, although any attempts of assistance would start with the contact centre.

Progress's head office was in the middle of Leyland, with the loosening of Coronavirus restrictions, more in person support and outreach could be achieved in the office, over the phone or in people's homes.

Both Progress and Jigsaw believed that mutual exchange was a positive option for tenants, particularly for those that wanted to upsize or downsize. For a mutual exchange to take place, both tenants must have resided in their properties for 12 months. Mutual exchanges were not limited to the same housing provider, nor were there geographical and local connection requirements, the only criteria was that each property met the adequate checks and inspections, and that the exchange was not across general needs or extra care, any designated specific use property would be refused a mutual exchange with a property that was not.

Both Progress and Jigsaw would assist residents to mutually exchange and allowed residents to arrange their own through various websites including Facebook.

Mutual exchanges were not counted in the figures and quotes as the process did not free up a property nor did it remove a needed property.

The process of reviewing the Common Allocation Policy was due to start imminently, and was expected to take months, with full involvement from all partners and external consultants.

Select Move advertised all properties, although other websites were used such as Moving Soon and Rightmove to ensure properties were not left empty longer than needed.

For Jigsaw, the highest demand was general need, and two- and three-bedroom properties, followed by one and two bedroom flats. The lowest demand was for bedsits and the few sheltered schemes in Chorley. Initiatives such as 'Refer a Friend' were used frequently in addition to other marketing initiatives and websites to fill vacant properties.

It was highlighted that in situations when an individual needed a property usually reserved for those 55 and above, but did not meet the age requirement, it was at the discretion of the housing partners if an allowance would be made, following the completion of vetting and checks.

It was acknowledged that there was a shortage of homes in general across the country, but it was highlighted that there was a significant shortage in one-bedroom flats. Since 2010, 700 new homes joined the service in Chorley, all from Section 106 Agreements.

Feedback received was generally positive. It was noted that Select Move was a simpler process compared to other authorities.

18 Date of Next Meeting

14 April 2022, 6:30pm.

Chair

Date