

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director (Communities) (Introduced by Executive Member (Homes and Housing))	Executive Cabinet	Thursday, 23 February 2023

## Executive Cabinet Response to the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group on Select Move

Is this report confidential?	No
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Is this decision key?	Yes
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Savings or expenditure amounting to greater than £100,000	<b>Significant impact on 2 or more council wards</b>
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### Purpose of the Report

- To outline the response to the recommendations of the Task Group for Select Move and provide a final update to implement and action the 18 recommendations made by the overview and Scrutiny Task Group.

### Recommendations to Executive Cabinet

- That the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group be received, and the action plan to deliver these recommendations is accepted.

### Reasons for recommendations

- To address the 18 recommendations made by the task group and implement the actions detailed in this report.

### Other options considered and rejected

- The action plan in response to the recommendations not to be implemented, however it is important to regularly monitor the choice-based lettings scheme and implement actions recommended to ensure Select Move is meeting the needs of the applicants.

### Executive summary

- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned a report on Select Move to be delivered by the Director of Communities and was presented at the meeting on the 30th September 2021. Following the delivery of the report, it was agreed for the matter to be the subject of a Task Group which commenced in December 2021.

6. The objectives of the Task Group were:
  - To ensure that recommendations made in 2014 are being adhered to, if applicable.
  - To investigate and evidence whether Select Move is meeting the needs, satisfaction and benefits of customers and Members.
  - To investigate the current methods and models of communication between Select Move and customers, and explore what actions, if any can be taken to improve the process, accessibility and increase transparency.
7. The final report of the task group made 18 recommendations for action, some of which had been addressed as part of Select Move Policy review.
8. All the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Select Move Task group were accepted at Executive Cabinet on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2022.
9. The Select Move Partnership was in the process of reviewing the Allocations Policy and the recommendations of the Task group made a very valuable contribution to this review. The Chair of the Task group Cllr June Molyneaux, as well as all the members involved are thanked for their thorough review.

### Corporate priorities

10. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

<b>Housing where residents can live well</b>	A green and sustainable borough
An enterprising economy with vibrant local centres in urban and rural areas	Healthy, safe and engaged communities

### Background to the report

11. In 2021, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee asked the Task Group to undertake a scrutiny inquiry to look at the Select Move Choice Based Lettings scheme, of which the Council is a member, alongside 11 Registered Providers of social housing.
12. Objectives were agreed to investigate and evidence whether Select Move is meeting the needs to the satisfaction of the applicants and ensuring that the service is efficient, easy to use and is meeting the needs of users while identifying and considering what the Council can influence.

### Recommendations and Action Plan

13. There were 18 recommendations made by the task group. These recommendations are shown in the table below alongside any actions that will be or have been implemented.

No	Recommendation	Actions / Responses	Lead
1	Review the role Chorley Council's Customer Service has in relation to Select Move and housing	Housing officers have provided training to both existing and new staff to ensure all staff are equipped with the knowledge and	Select Move Coordinator / Housing

	applications and queries.	<p>tools to assist customers with general Select Move enquiries. The training includes tasks such as log in issues, shortlisting, and bids etc.</p> <p>The team will continue to offer training to customer services along with any additional support, and guidance required.</p>	Solutions Manager
2	An annual Member Learning Session to be conducted with Members of Chorley Borough Council, specifically in relation to Select Move. Members are to be updated and kept informed on any substantial changes made to Select Move.	The first of the annual member learning sessions has been delivered on the 23 <sup>rd</sup> January 2023, by the Select Move Coordinator.	Select Move Coordinator
3	Simplify the banding system and influence the partnership to reduce the number of bands to ensure they are simple to understand and user friendly. Ensure that any consideration for changing a user's banding is communicated and clear.	<p>Simplifying the banding has been addressed in the Select Move Policy Review.</p> <p>Recommendations in the new policy is to reduce bands to A-C with a light touch band D (No Housing need and Sheltered approved regardless of tenure).</p> <p>All changes to bands are communicated by letter/email to customers.</p>	Select Move Coordinator – Policy review
4	Chorley Council to maintain the position that the Select Move Partnership keeps an open housing register to prevent disqualifying those with no evidenced housing need	<p>It was agreed across the partnership to maintain an open register.</p> <p>Recommendations for the new policy is to have a band D no housing need and to also accept people who are sheltered approved regardless of tenure.</p>	Select Move Coordinator – Policy review
5	The Select Move partnership to tighten the qualification criteria for local connection, and for Members of Chorley Borough Council to be frequently informed of migration figures, e.g. Member Learning Session, In the Know, or	<p>Strengthening the Local Connection has been addressed in the Select Move Policy Review.</p> <p>It was identified that the current policy is less effective than neighbouring local authorities when it comes to Local connection.</p>	Select Move Coordinator – Policy review

	<p>upon Member request.</p>	<p>In the current policy a local connection is established after 6 months of residing in the Borough.</p> <p>Increasing the local connection to 2 years will require people to demonstrate they have an established connection to the Borough and have invested in our communities.</p> <p>There will be exceptions under homelessness legislation to fulfill statutory duties. Safeguards will be applied for applicants who have fled domestic abuse or extreme threats of violence from another area.</p> <p>Members will be regularly informed of migration figures during member learning sessions and upon request.</p>	
6	<p>The Select Move Partnership to retain the practice of being able to refuse three reasonable offers withing the common allocations policy (though one offer refusal will still allow the council to discharge its statutory homelessness duty it would not disqualify a customer from the register).</p>	<p>To keep three refusals was recommend to the Partnership but it was agreed to amend the policy to consult on the reduction to two reasonable offers.</p> <p>Select Move is a choice based letting system and people have a choice to bid on properties themselves. The onus is on them to ensure that the area and property is suitable for them prior to placing the bid (this is one of the reasons why the bidding cycle is for 5 days).</p> <p>The reduction was recommended due to the delay caused to the process by refusals which can result in weeks of delays and possible re-advertisement of the property.</p> <p>As part of this change, the partnership will ensure there is clear communication via adverts and letters, advising on best practice when expressing interest</p>	<p>Select Move Coordinator – Policy review</p>

		<p>in properties.</p> <p>The definition of a reasonable offer is set out in the new policy. For example, refusal of a property that does not meet an applicant's needs for disability adaptations, would be classed as a reasonable reason to refuse a property.</p>	
7	<p>Encourage the partnership to increase the threshold of individual savings and income within the policy review, maintaining the position that exemptions will be assessed on housing need.</p>	<p>This was put forward to the partnership. The policy is currently £30,000 savings and £60,000 household income.</p> <p>Individual circumstances would always be considered if an applicant's needs can only be met by Social Housing.</p> <p>It is recognised in the proposed changes to band D would now allow applicants to register if the applicant can demonstrate a need for sheltered accommodation regardless of tenure.</p>	<p>Select Move Coordinator – Policy review</p>
8	<p>Ensure and exercise oversight of the Select Move Partnerships' adherence to the Common Allocations Policy, to ensure transparency, clarity, and accountability.</p>	<p>The Select Move Co-ordinator will monitor and oversee how the partners are operating to ensure a fair and fit for purpose policy and partnership is in place.</p> <p>The Co-Ordinator will ensure policies and procedures are regularly reviewed, along with the new proposed Select Move policy. The policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it continues to reflect the partnership's and Council's priorities.</p> <p>The Co-ordinator attends both operational and steering group meeting and is currently building relationships across the partnership, which is paramount to this role in helping us improve how we deliver social housing across the three LA's.</p> <p>Along with reviewing operational</p>	<p>Select Move Co-ordinator</p>

		processes/procedures across the partnership the coordinator will be delivering training and workshops to help improve consistency and efficiency on how the service is delivered.	
9	Annual satisfaction survey to be completed with all users of Select Move, with action plans in place to resolve reported issues.	It has been agreed to undertake an annual survey.  The next survey will be arranged for July 2023.	Select Move Co-ordinator
10	Ensure and exercise oversight of the Select Move Partnership monitoring consistency in the application process, policies in relation to valid documentation, e.g. GP evidence letters.	The Select Move Co-Ordinator will monitor consistency in the application process and policies in relation to valid documentation.  Guidance on assessing medical applications is proposed in the new draft allocations policy as an appendix.	Select Move Coordinator  Housing Solutions Manager
11	Ensure that face to face access remains available to all users alongside the technological improvements. If required, users are to be signposted to services available such as Citizens Advice Bureau and Chorley Help the Homeless.	Face to face support via our Housing team is available weekdays in the Council's Union Street Offices and two officers are on call every day to support this service.  Currently, the housing officers are signposting customers to Chorley Help the Homeless and the digital sessions delivered by the Communities Teams. Chorley Help the Homeless have limited scope to help customers through the Select Move application process but the team are looking to deliver training to volunteers on how best to support customers through the process.	Housing Solutions Manager  Housing Solutions Manager / Select Move Coordinator
12	Chorley Council to explore further opportunities to support customers in rural areas to access the Select Move register, e.g. commission library services.	Contact will be made with the Housing Associations to discuss access in rural areas.	Select Move Coordinator
13	Monitor the progress and roll out of the upgraded system provided by Civica which should allow the Select Move website to be functional, and easy to use on all devices. Chorley Council to be	The upgrade was implemented on the 3 <sup>rd</sup> November 2022, training has been provided on the new system. The website is more mobile friendly, reducing those barriers for those customers with	Select Move Coordinator

	actively involved in any future procurement exercise in relation to the Choice Base Letting platform.	only mobile devices. The new element to allow customers to upload documents themselves from their Select Move account is proving to be positive, making the process more efficient.  Any future procurement will involve Chorley Council.	
14	Provide clear and open lines of communication and information to allow applicants of Select Move to manage and set their expectations. This is to include photographs of listed properties, average waiting times for responses, average waiting times for different sized properties and average waiting times per geographic location.	As part of the upgrade customers are now able to view visual maps showing average waiting times across the borough, this also provides information on how many properties have been advertised and let per area, this is a real positive tool to help meet expectations on lengths of time it takes to be housed and the demand on Social housing.  <a href="#">Search properties - SelectMove</a>  Jigsaw has agreed to ensure photographs are available for the properties.	Select Move Coordinator
15	Develop a greater understanding and insight into the Housing Associations makeup, and demographics of the people moving into the area through the 25% allowance not through Select Move.	This will be requested; however, as the 25% sits outside the Select Move Policy this will be discretionary	Select Move Coordinator
16	That the partnership recognise the importance of treating social housing customers with the dignity and respect, and that the customer service standards are of utmost priority.	This is paramount to our staff and customer service standards are our utmost priority.  The team is now fully staffed, and development training has been scheduled which will support the team in responding effectively to customers providing a quality service.	Housing Solutions Manager  Select Move Coordinator
17	A further Select Move Task Group, or a Scrutiny Investigation to be conducted following the final Monitoring Report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee if the recommendations failed to be adhered to or if significant issues	Agreed by Executive Cabinet 10 <sup>th</sup> November 2022.	Executive Member for Homes and Housing

	arise.		
18	Chorley Council to explore the advantages and disadvantages of remaining within the partnership and the impact of increasing its own housing stock.	Agreed by Executive Cabinet 10 <sup>th</sup> November 2022 and adopted as a central theme in the Council's Corporate Strategy "Housing where residents can live well". Within six months of the consultation and implementation of the Allocations Policy a review will be undertaken of the advantages and disadvantages of remaining in the partnership.	Executive Member for Homes and Housing

### Climate change and air quality

14. The work noted in the report does not impact on the Councils Carbon emissions and the wider Climate Emergency and sustainability targets of the Council.

### Equality and diversity

15. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken and no direct implications have been identified.

### Risk

16. A risk register is available for the Select Move Partnership and is available on the Council's risk management system.

### Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

17. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

### Comments of the Monitoring Officer

18. There are no concerns with this report from a Monitoring officer perspective. A number of the recommendations have already been actioned – the review of the Select Move policy (being consulted on) in particular addresses some of the identified issues.

### Background documents

Background Papers		
Document	Date	File
Overview and task Group Final report	10/11/2022	<a href="#">Overview and Scrutiny Task Group Final Report - Select Move.pdf</a>
Select Move Policy 2018	2018	<a href="#">Allocation Policy 2018.docx (live.com)</a>
Select Move Policy Review 2022	Not yet implemented - Exec Cabinet meeting 19/01/2023	<a href="#">Select Move Policy Review 2022 Executive Cabinet Report Template.pdf</a>



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