



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

Meeting date **Thursday, 18 August 2022**

Committee Members present: Councillor June Molyneaux (Chair), Councillor Sarah Ainsworth (Vice-Chair) and Councillors James Nevett and Kim Snape

Committee Members present virtually Councillors Hasina Khan

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

A video recording of the public session of this meeting is available to view on [YouTube here](#)

11 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

12 Discussion with MP Chorley - Sir Lindsay Hoyle

The Task group welcomed Sir Lindsay Hoyle, MP for Chorley to the Task Group, to share his experience with Select Move.

Banding

Banding caused frequent confusion and misinformation, as both applicants and properties on Select Move were banded. It was highlighted that a large proportion of Band B properties were adapted and were for mobility and medical needs, which explained why some believed Band C provided more opportunities for properties than Band B.

The issues with banding could be addressed within the Allocations Policy review, it was added that there had been cases where applicants were mis-banded, but mistakes were rectified upon discovery.

Local Connection

75% of lets through Select Move had to be evidenced that the applicant met the criteria for local connection. Andy Gale previously stated that the current policy was considered to be generous at six months residency in the borough, as the majority of English councils required two years.

It was the responsibility of partners to relay their true void information and that they have met the 75% requirement. The process had been on hold during the pandemic but restarted by the Select Move Coordinator. There was no way to audit the information provided, but there was no evidence to suggest dishonesty or deceit had taken place.

It was questioned by the MP if the 25% was used to move 'trouble' residents from one area to another and raised that there had been occasions of families moved into Chorley disrupting neighborhood's with threats, intimidation, and property damage.

The MP commented that the six months local connection policy was absurd and that the vetting process was not as thorough as required and believed that the other local authorities of the partnership were benefitting at the expense of Chorley residents which was unacceptable.

Migration into the Borough

The MP held concerns that there were far greater numbers of people migrating into Chorley from South Ribble and Preston via Select Move than people emigrating from Chorley to the partner authorities.

Chorley, Preston and South Ribble all adhered to the same allocations policy. Figures were unavailable to document migration into Chorley from neighbouring authorities such as West Lancs, Wigan, Bolton, and Blackburn, nor information to show those that left Chorley and the span of the partnership. It was reiterated that there was no local connection requirement for those fleeing domestic abuse to be housed in the area. The overall net migration figure as of February 2022 was a +2% migration into Chorley. The figure could be monitored and shared quarterly.

Cotswold House

Concern was raised with the use of Cotswold House from those outside of Chorley, as residence for six months would meet the criteria for local connection. It was explained that Cotswold House was temporary accommodation and not intended for residents to stay more than a few months, however, due to the need and lack of larger and adapted properties, some residents were housed longer than desired.

Cotswold house had not been used by South Ribble Borough Council in the previous 12 months, and the only residents from South Ribble that may have used Cotswold House were those fleeing domestic abuse. It was noted that it was not one way, and that South Ribble and Preston had housed residents from Chorley.

Cotswold House tightly vetted applicants, and those with a history of criminality, and violence would not be eligible for a place.

Allocations Policy.

It was the Section 106 agreements that decided the number of properties in new developments that were placed on Select Move, and the stipulations in place. An example given was new homes in Mawdesley were allocated to residents of the village with a housing need. It required being advertised three times, each time widening the scope due to the inability to fill the properties.

Members of the Task Group felt that the rule that stated that applicants were illegible for Select Move if they had savings of over £30,000 was restrictive despite being considerably higher than the national average limit of £16,000, and stated that housing should be based on need and not wealth, and in doing so could create divide and further issue.

The MP expressed desire for a churn that would allow people to gain the accommodation that they require. With examples given of properties too large and ill equipped for their needs, but what was required was not available, and what was available may not meet the needs. There were areas where segregation of ages could be beneficial as often the mix of young people and elderly was not ideal. It was highlighted that the Council had undertaken work to address issues such as providing extra care facilities, the purchase of bungalows and steps taken to free up houses for the people of Chorley, but was limited by only having influence over the properties it owned.

All the councils in the partnership adhered to the same rules, however, certain aspects such as age requirements were set by the Housing Associations that was consistent across their stock across geographic locations. However, the Housing Associations have been able to claim 'special exemptions' to break their age criteria.

View of Select Move

It was the view of Sir Lindsay Hoyle that if Select Move was failing the residents of Chorley, then a question needed to be asked about Chorley's role in the partnership. Issues with the service included the difficulty of filling in the forms, significant mistakes made which included examples of keys being offered and withdrawn without answer or justification. Residents were let down by the system. Some were treated badly and felt looked down upon, urgent improvement was required with the communication within the system and with the customer service provided.

Throughout the process of the Task Group, the housing team received additional capacity which had removed the backlog and decreased the time required to respond to users. The Director of Communities was shocked and offered apologies to anyone that felt looked down upon and added that she did not recognise the behaviour from the staff.

It was noted that the Housing Ombudsman would be contacted if Housing Associations did not exercise their duty of care. Issues with the quality of the housing provided would be the remit of housing enforcement, and anti-social behaviour legislation could be actioned against any perpetrator. The MP stated that cases had been given where perpetrators retaliated against those that made complaints and increased the antisocial behaviour creating areas people did not want to live in.

The MP suggested that the council could create a Housing Association to ensure that the residents of Chorley were supported. Derelict homes could be purchased and renovated, it was noted however, that such action would need a political decision made by the council.

13 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Select Move will take place 8 September 2022, at 4:00pm.

Chair

Date