

| Report of | Meeting | Date |
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| Director of Communities | Overview and Scrutiny Committee | Thursday, 5 October 2023 |

First Monitoring Report - Select Move Overview and Scrutiny Task Group Oct 2023

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

- To provide the first update of the work undertaken to deliver the 18 recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group for Select Move.

Recommendations

- That the updates provided on this report are noted.

Reasons for recommendations

- To ensure the actions set out in the February Executive Cabinet report have been completed, in progress and track to be implemented.

Other options considered and rejected

- Not applicable

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.
- 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.
- The actions in response to the 18 recommendations were presented to the Executive Cabinet on the 23rd February 2023 and these were approved.

Corporate priorities

7. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

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| Housing where residents can live well | 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

8. 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.
9. 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 Progress to Date

10. The 18 recommendations made by the task group were presented to Executive Cabinet on 23rd February 2023 and these were endorsed for action.
11. The table below sets out the 18 recommendations, with the second column providing actions and responses to the recommendations and the third column providing the latest update on progress.

Recommendations and Update

| No | Recommendation | Action / Responses February Report | Latest Update |
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| 1 | Review the role Chorley Council's Customer Service has in relation to Select Move and housing applications and queries. | Housing officers have provided training to both existing and new staff to ensure all staff are equipped with the knowledge and tools to assist customers with general Select Move enquiries. The training includes tasks such as log in issues, shortlisting, and bids etc. | Training has been provided to existing and new staff on the Select move process. Meeting have been held with customer services to inform them of any changes to the processes. |

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| | | <p>The team will continue to offer training to customer services along with any additional support, and guidance required.</p> | <p>The team are in the process of recruiting new staff and each will have their own training and development programme.</p> |
| 2 | <p>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.</p> | <p>The first of the annual member learning sessions has been arranged for the 23rd January 2023, this will be delivered by the Select Move Co-ordinator.</p> | <p>This member Learning session was delivered by the Select Move Co-ordinator on the 23rd January 2023.</p> |
| 3 | <p>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> | <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> | <p>The new policy is on track to be implemented in February 2024, all the proposals requested on the three consultation exercises have been agreed and no further changes to the original proposal have been made.</p> <p>Report detailing the response to the policy is attached.</p> |
| 4 | <p>Chorley Council to maintain the position that the Select Move Partnership keeps an open housing register</p> | <p>It was agreed across the partnership to maintain an open register.</p> | <p>The new policy is on track to be implemented in February 2024.</p> |

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| | to prevent disqualifying those with no evidenced housing need | 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>The partnership agreed to maintain the open register and the new proposed policy does not change this.</p> <p>The recommendation to have a band D no housing need was supported by consultees and the partnership.</p> |
| 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 upon Member request. | <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 in relation to local connection.</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 fulfil statutory duties. Safeguards will be applied for applicants who have fled domestic abuse or extreme threats of violence from another area.</p> | <p>The consultation results on the proposals to strengthen the local connection rules showed a 76% support from Chorley residents and 84% support from the partnership area. Of the 24 % who disagreed with the proposal most commented that the move from 6 months to two years is too high.</p> <p>Due to the overall support all the proposals requested on the three consultation exercises have been agreed and no further changes to the proposed policy have been made.</p> <p>Members have been informed of migration figures at the Select Move learning session and the latest results reported to members on 26th</p> |

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| | | | September show in the months from April -June there were 7 migrations into the borough through Select Move and 12 migrations to outside of the borough. |
| 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 recommended 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 the 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>This reduction was recommended due to the delay caused to the process by refusals which can result in weeks delay 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 in properties.</p> <p>The definition of a reasonable offer is set out in the proposed new policy. For example, refusal of a property that does not meet an applicant's needs for disability adaptations would</p> | <p>There was 68% support from Chorley residents for the proposal of reducing three reasonable offers down to two. Comments from residents were that adverts need to be more informative including photos and clearer advice needs to be given on what would be classed as a reasonable refusal.</p> <p>These comments will be taken on board when the policy goes live and the Select Move on-line system is amended.</p> |

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| | | be classed as a reasonable reason to refuse a property. | |
| 7 | 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>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 they can demonstrate a need for sheltered accommodation regardless of tenure.</p> | <p>The new policy is on track to be implemented in February 2024, all the proposals requested on the three consultations where agreed and no further changes to this have been made.</p> <p>Individual circumstance would always be considered especially if applicant's needs can only be met with social Housing.</p> |
| 8 | Ensure and exercise oversight of the Select Move Partnerships' adherence to the Common Allocations Policy, to ensure transparency, clarity, and accountability. | <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. The new proposed Select Move 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 meetings and is currently building relationships across the partnership, which is paramount to this role in helping improve the delivery of social housing across the three LA's.</p> | <p>Ongoing - the Co-ordinator continues to chair the monthly meetings and continues to oversee the implementation of the new proposed policy.</p> <p>Workshops are being arranged to tackle inconsistency in processing, these will be arranged alongside the policy implementation.</p> |

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| | | Along with reviewing operational processes/procedures across the partnership the coordinator will be delivering training and workshops to help improve consistency and efficiency in 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. | Due to the recent Select Move consultation exercise which finished in August it was felt more appropriate to undertake the satisfaction survey once the consultation exercise was completed. The survey will now take place in October. |
| 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 polices in relation to valid documentation. Guidance on assessing medical applications is proposed in the new draft allocations policy as an appendix. | Ongoing - the coordinator continues to chair the monthly meetings and continues to oversee the implementation of the new proposed policy. Workshops are being arranged to tackle inconsistency in processing, these will be arranged alongside the policy implementation. Guidance specifically on assessing medical applications has been produced and will be adopted alongside the policy in Feb 2024. |

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| 11 | <p>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.</p> | <p>Face to Face support via our Housing team is available weekdays in the Council's Union Street Office and two officers are on call every day to support this service.</p> <p>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 support customers but the team are looking to deliver training to all volunteers on how best to support customers.</p> | <p>Housing Officers continue to have a presence daily in the Union Street offices.</p> <p>The Housing team have a case load of 238 cases and respond to over 117 enquires a day via e-mails, calls, web messages and visits. Face to face assessments are offered to our residents.</p> <p>Signposting is undertaken with consent of the customer to CAB, Help the Homeless and to our own Social Prescribing Service.</p> <p>Training has been provided to volunteers at Help the Homeless on how to support our residents going through the assessment process.</p> |
| 12 | <p>Chorley Council to explore further opportunities to support customers in rural areas to access the Select Move register, e.g. commission library services.</p> | <p>Contact will be made with the RP's to discuss access in rural areas.</p> | <p>Discussions have taken place with RP's to address to explore opportunities to support customers in rural areas.</p> <p>This has tied in with the Council's Digital Skills project which was delivered successfully. A</p> |

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| | | | <p>programme of learning opportunities was launched and delivered across many community venues both in central and rural Chorley.</p> <p>The council commissioned programme was a short, intensive offer to promote the benefits of building digital literacy whilst developing fundamental skills. This also included support for people accessing Select Move.</p> <p>Particular success has been achieved when an arrangement has been made with existing groups of residents, to bring the programme to their members as part of their regular meetings; friendship groups, social events, religious congregations.</p> <p>Through delivery of this programme, it has become apparent that the existing support available at local libraries, charities and voluntary groups is sufficient to meet the demand, with a</p> |
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| | | | referral pathway created and circulated within customer facing council teams and local networks. |
| 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 actively involved in any future procurement exercise in relation to the Choice Base Letting platform. | <p>The upgrade was implemented on the 3rd November 2022 and training has been provided to the team and customers on the new system. The website is more mobile friendly, reducing those barriers for those customers with 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.</p> <p>Any future procurement will involve Chorley Council.</p> | Completed |
| 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. | <p>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 manage expectations on lengths of time it takes to be housed and the demand on Social housing.</p> <p>Search properties - SelectMove</p> <p>Jigsaw have agreed to ensure photographs are available for their properties.</p> | Ongoing business as usual - The visual hex maps are used daily by customers and officers and make a real difference in managing expectations. |
| 15 | Develop a greater understanding and | This will be requested; however, as the 25% sits | This information has not been received |

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| | insight into the Housing Associations makeup, and demographics of the people moving into the area through the 25% allowance not through Select Move. | outside the Select Move Policy this will be discretionary. | from the Housing Associations and will be requested again. |
| 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. | <p>This is paramount to our staff and customer service standards are our utmost priority.</p> <p>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.</p> | <p>Ongoing – this remains our utmost priority, training will continue to be provided to ensure officers are up to date on legislation.</p> <p>New job roles with the housing have been advertised, which will improve capacity.</p> <p>Two temporary roles have been externally funded including supporting people at risk of homelessness experiencing Domestic violence and improving the hospital discharge where housing needs have been identified.</p> |
| 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 arise. | Agreed by Executive Cabinet 10 th November 2022. | No further update from the previous action. |

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| 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 th November 2022 and adopted as a central theme in the Council's Corporate Strategy "Housing where residents can live well". | No further update from the previous action. |

Climate change and air quality

12. The work noted in this report has an overall negative/positive impact on the Councils Carbon emissions and the wider Climate Emergency and sustainability targets of the Council.

Equality and diversity

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

Risk

14. 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

15. There are no direct financial implications of this report.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

16. The report is for noting – there are no direct legal implications arising.

Background documents

| Background Papers | | |
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| Document | Date | File |
| Overview and task Group Final report | 10/11/2022 | Overview and Scrutiny Task Group Final Report - Select Move.pdf |
| Select Move Policy 2018 | 2018 | Allocation Policy 2018.docx (live.com) |

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| Select Move Policy Review 2022 | Exec Cabinet meeting 19/01/2023 | Select Move Policy Review 2022 Executive Cabinet Report Template.pdf |
| Recommendation response - Select Move – Overview and Scrutiny | Exec Cabinet Meeting 23/02/2023 | Select Move - Overview and Scrutiny Executive Cabinet Report Template.pdf (moderngov.co.uk) |

| Report Author: | Email: | Telephone: | Date: |
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