

HOUSING AND TRANSITIONS PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

22 February 2012

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Jonathan Brash (Housing and Transitions Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Damien Wilson, Assistant Director, Regeneration and Planning
Nigel Johnson, Housing Services Manager
Joanne Burnley, Principal Environmental Health Officer
Karen Kelly, Housing Strategy Officer
Linda Igoe, Principal Housing Advice Officer
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

4. Housing Regeneration Transition Fund Announcement *(Assistant Director, Regeneration and Planning)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report is to update Portfolio Holder on the outcome of the Housing Market Renewal (HMR) transition fund announced by Government in November 2011 and set out next steps in project development for the Carr/Hopps Street regeneration area.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report provided background information on the current position in relation to housing regeneration and highlighted the outcome of the HMR Transition fund including the purpose of the fund and the next steps in relation to project development and implementation of the Carr/Hopps Street regeneration area. The report also sets out the proposed arrangements for approval of the detailed funding strategy as part of the 2012/13 budget process.

A member of the public, who was in attendance at the meeting and affected by the proposals, sought clarification as to when residents in Carr Street would be relocated. The Chair indicated that a further report would be considered by Cabinet on 19 March 2012 and requested the individual's contact details indicating that arrangements would be made for the relevant

officer to provide clarification in this regard as soon as possible.

Decision

That the contents of the report, be noted.

5. Allocations Outside of Choice Based Lettings (Assistant Director, Regeneration and Planning)

Type of decision

Key – test ii applies

Purpose of report

To inform the Housing and Transition Portfolio Holder about specific instances in which a social housing allocation will be made outside of the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Common Allocations Policy.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

This report provided details about how, in certain cases, it was sometimes necessary to make social housing allocations outside of the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system in order to respond flexibly to local needs and demands.

The report included background information to the development of the scheme as well as details of the following policies that had been developed by Housing Hartlepool in consultation with the Council:-

- Team around the Household Rehousing Policy
- Housing Hartlepool Management Transfers Policy

It was reported that social housing allocations would only be made outside of CBL in accordance with the policies that had been outlined and were monitored through joint meetings held between the Council and Housing Hartlepool.

The Portfolio Holder raised concerns regarding the benefits of management transfers to the tenant and questioned why it was considered appropriate to operate outside the choice based letting system in homelessness situations. In response, it was reported that the proposals provided the opportunity to support tenants with the option to move to cheaper accommodation to avoid the risk of homelessness as a result of arrears. The impact of the forthcoming Housing Benefit changes and under occupation charge was also discussed.

Whilst the shortage of family homes was noted, the Portfolio Holder sought assurances that the proposals would not force under occupancy households to move to smaller properties. The Housing Services Manager

indicated that tenants would not be forced to move to smaller properties and the proposals were to support tenants who recognised the need to relocate and would only be undertaken with the tenants consent.

The Portfolio Holder noted the low percentage of properties let via the management transfer process and requested that future monitoring reports should include details of the number of lettings made via this process.

Decision

- (i) The Portfolio Holder endorsed the specific instances in which a social housing allocation would be made outside of the CBL system.
- (ii) That future monitoring reports include details of the number of lettings made via the management transfer process.

6. Quarterly Housing Report *(Assistant Director, Regeneration and Planning)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To update the Housing and Transition Portfolio Holder about progress across key areas of the Housing Service during the first three quarters of 2011/12.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

This report provided a quarterly update on progress across key areas of the Housing Service relating to empty homes, enforcement activity, selective licensing, Disabled Facilities Grants, housing allocations and housing advice and homelessness prevention.

With regard to bringing empty properties back into use the Portfolio Holder was pleased to note that the target had been exceeded and congratulated officers for their hard work in achieving this target. Reference was made to the improvement works scheduled for February 2012 and the Portfolio Holder was keen to ensure that improvement works were carried out on schedule.

The Portfolio Holder indicated that a number of tenants were not aware of their enforcement rights and emphasised the need to ensure that tenants were reminded of such rights and supported in this process. The Portfolio Holder was advised that tenant information packs had been prepared and were available for tenants.

The Portfolio referred to recent queries from Ward Councillors regarding the timescales for extending the Selective Licensing Scheme to other areas

of the town and highlighted the importance of sharing details of the proposals with all Ward Councillors. It was noted that a draft report was currently being prepared. The Portfolio Holder requested that input be sought from the Portfolio Holder in relation to the proposals prior to submission to a future Portfolio Holder meeting and that Ward Councillors be given the opportunity to attend that meeting to contribute to discussions.

Following discussion in relation to the Selective Licensing Review, the importance of collating data and evidence to confirm the success of the scheme and justify any extension of the scheme, it was highlighted that this issue would be discussed in further detail at a future Portfolio meeting.

Officers responded to queries in relation to the outcome of the good tenant scheme applications received during April to December 2011, as set out in the report. The Portfolio Holder suggested that a review of the good tenant scheme be undertaken to consider how information was administered by the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit.

Decision

- (i) The Portfolio Holder noted the contents of the report and progress made across key areas of the Housing Service.
- (ii) That input be sought from the Portfolio Holder and all Ward Councillors in relation to the proposals for extending the Selective Licensing Scheme.
- (iii) That a review of the Good Tenant Scheme be undertaken to consider the administration process by the Anti-Social Behaviour Team.

The meeting concluded at 4.50 pm.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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