

Select Committee on Environment – Wednesday 8th September 2010

Report of the Director of Adult, Community & Housing Services

Council Housing Void Property Review

Purpose of Report

1. To update members of progress to date.

Background

2. Concern has been expressed by Members and the Cabinet Performance Sub Committee about the increasing trend in void loss. Even against a revised target of 1.8%, (in line with financial predictions), the end of quarter one 2010/11 out-turn was 2.04%.
3. Members of this Committee on 24th June 2010 agreed to task the Housing Working Group to scrutinise the performance and to report back to this Committee with a review to making recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Housing. Due to other commitments it has not been possible to convene a Working Party to date.

Remit of the Housing Working Group

- 4a. The end to end lettings review of the whole void and lettings process to be undertaken jointly by Housing Management and Building Services.

Following a tender process TEAL have been appointed. The project objectives are as follows:-

The overall objectives are to improve business efficiency and maximise customer satisfaction. We would expect success to be measurable through

- A reduction in rent lost through properties being empty.
- A reduction in the overall cost of void management, to be achieved through one or more of the following: savings on works costs, minimising losses on rechargeable work, and savings on administration costs.
- A reduction in the amount of churn on our housing register and in the abortive work it entails.
- A reduction in failure demand, including but not limited to
 - Customers who contact us repeatedly and/or whose enquiries result from poor initial handling

- Tenancy failures i.e. eviction, abandonment, move to lodgings or unknown
- A continuous improvement in customer satisfaction (measured through 100% customer feedback throughout and beyond the project).

We also expect a transfer of learning and skills to some of our own staff, so that following the review they will own the changes and be positioned as enablers of future continuous improvement.

Although it may be possible to achieve some 'quick wins' during the review the efficiencies will be achieved during 2011/12. Attached as Appendix 1 is the Project Outline. The project outline shows the component parts of the process and Members will note a 'gate' at the conclusion of the separate processes. This is known as a gate review when outcomes are shared with Senior Management and the Cabinet Member for Housing. It is intended that the Working Group is convened after the review to enable the findings to be further debated. Members wishing to learn more about TEAL are directed to their web site www.tealconsultancy.co.uk.

4b. High Cost Voids

High cost voids will be looked at as part of the review but the issue of high cost voids/budgetary provision is an immediate issue. The existing budget cannot continue to fund the increase in the number of high cost voids arising.

4c. Low Demand/No Wait Properties

Members are aware that the demand for social housing exceeds supply but this is not consistent for all property types. There appears to be two main issues, firstly the property type may not be popular or secondly the designation on blocks results in no applicants applying in the 'required' age category against a growing list of younger people who are precluded from applying because of the age restriction. These properties are having an adverse affect on the void loss.

5. This list is not necessarily exclusive and members may wish to add to the remit as it receives reports back from the Working Group.

Finance

6. This report in itself has no financial implications.

Law

7. This report in itself has no legal implications.

Equality Impact

8. This report in itself has no equality impact implications.

Recommendations

9. Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

10. Members are asked to agree the remit of the Housing Working Group.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Sanders". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning of the first name.

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Linda Sanders
Director of Adult, Community & Housing Services

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