

APPENDIX D

Comments of Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee 24 January 2011

Review of Choice Based Lettings and draft Allocations Policy

To receive a report outlining the current position of the Council's development of a Choice Based Lettings and draft Allocations Policy.

Minutes:

The Committee received and considered a report which provided Members with an update on Choice Based Lettings, the scheme for allocating social housing and the opportunity to comment on the Allocations Policy, a Framework for determining priorities for social housing.

The Sub Regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme (CBL) worked in partnership with Aragon Housing Association, Bedford Borough Council, Luton Borough Council and Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association. The CBL had created an Allocations Policy which would be reviewed twelve months after the June 2009 launch.

The Sub Regional Partnership Board monitors the collective CBL performance as well as that of the individual partners. A benchmarking exercise was being undertaken to compare Bedfordshire Home finder with similar sized Sub Regional Schemes across England.

The Committee were informed that there were currently 10,419 people registered for social housing across the partnership. The participation rate is 55% with average bids of 6,685 per month. In addition, it was noted that cross board allocations would fluctuate during the year but evened out by the end of the year.

The Policy and Performance Manager provided a demonstration of the Bedfordshire Home finder software which provided tenants with information about properties which were available for rent and allowed the tenants the opportunity to place bids on three properties in any cycle. It was explained that a cycle lasted for one week and occurred every two weeks.

Members noted that this service provided flexibility as it included Registered Social Landlords. Members were provided with an explanation of the bidding system. It was explained that the higher the band number (1 being the highest) the applicant would be given first refusal of the property. There is a registration team who place people into the correct band having taken into consideration their social, medical or housing need. In response to a question it was noted that Bedford Court and Hockliffe Street, Leighton Buzzard were used for homeless arrangements.

The Committee considered the request of the CBL to improve the current software to include a Village sustainability function at a cost of £20k. The cost would have to be found as it was not part of the existing base budget for CBL. It was acknowledged that whilst a desirable function to have, it was not a required function.. The Committee agreed with Officers that this was not a high priority at the present time.

The Committee congratulated the Housing Team for their good work and endorsed the system.

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RESOLVED:

- 1. That the contents of the report be noted for information.**
- 2. That the Social Care Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee support the changes to the Allocations Policy.**
- 3. That the £20,000 software enhancement for “village sustainability” not be acquired at this time.**

RECOMMENDED to the Executive:

- 4. That the Executive endorse the Allocations Policy.**