

STRATEGIC HOUSING PANEL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 18 DECEMBER 2014 AT 2:00pm

Present: Councillors Lena Hogg, Chairman; John Bowman; Geoff Garrity; Reg Heathcote; Alan Jacob; Peter Stephenson and Paul Whalley.

Officers: Julie Betteridge, Head of Customer and Community Services; Debbie Cochrane Housing Services Manager

Also Present: Mr Michael Bullock, Director ARC4.

SH 17/14 Minutes

RESOLVED - That the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2014 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SH 18/14 Strategic Housing Market Assessment - Presentation

Members received a presentation by Michael Bullock, Director ARC 4 on Strategic Housing Market Assessment which was then open for questions and answers by Members and officers.

SH 19/14 The Redress Scheme for Letting Agency Work and Property management Work

Consideration was given to how enforcement action would be undertaken following the introduction of the Redress Scheme for letting agency work and property management. This scheme came into effect on the 1 October 2014 (Statutory Instrument 2539 (2014) refers) and will ensure that tenants have a straight forward route to take action if they get a poor deal.

RESOLVED – That a) the report be noted; and

b) any enforcement action required be undertaken by the housing services team.

SH 20/14 Tackling Illegal Immigration in Privately Rented Accommodation (Right to Rent)

Consideration was given to a report on measure set out by Government in an attempt to cut down on illegal immigration.

The measure considered is a new requirement for private sector landlords to check that tenants' immigration status does not disqualify them from renting a property. As a result, landlords who allow tenants without a so-called "right to rent" will be liable for a civil penalty.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted; and

b) prior to implementation of the legislation a briefing be given to elected members and private landlords to ensure that the new obligations are understood.

SH 21/14 Disabled Facilities Grants - Update

A report was submitted and noted updating members of the number of referrals made from the occupational therapist to the team responsible for disabled adaptations.

SH 22/14 Strategic Housing Action Plan

Members received and noted a verbal update on progress made on the Strategic Housing Action Plan.

It was noted that since 1 October 2014 to date the team has fully prevented 14 households from becoming homeless (this means they will continue to be able to live in their current home for six months or more).

This has been achieved through the following:

- Working with partners including Registered Social Landlords and the CAB to negotiate a reduction in rent arrears/repayment plans
- Securing DHP funding for clients
- Advising Private Landlords and tenants on sustaining tenancies
- Referrals into supported accommodation via Supporting People
- Rent in advance where it will sustain a tenancy
- Education and information (for example to parents who consider evicting their children and the issues of affordability and allocations)
- Liasing with family and other relatives
- Clients being allocated tenancies in CBL under Band C Homelessness Prevention

It was further noted that the team were currently working on 60 live homelessness prevention and advice case. All cases are at risk of becoming homeless and Housing Options Advisors are working closely with their clients to prevent this.

A lot of these cases are in extremely vulnerable and insecure housing situations and our greatest priority is ensuring they do not have to resort to rough sleeping.

Reasons for threat of homelessness being

Need for general housing advice/other 'one off' extreme circumstances –

Relationship breakdown

Eviction by parents

Eviction by other relatives

Housing Benefit arrears

In the same period, there have been 7 full homeless applications.

1 in October

5 in November

1 in December to date

All have had decisions made within 30 days. Outcomes were 3 No Duty (either not homeless/no priority need or intentionally homeless), 3 Duty and 1 is pending enquiries.

The meeting closed at 11.50am

Chairman

Date