

Bolsover District Council

Executive

7 September 2015

Housing Quarterly Report

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing

This report is public

Purpose of the Report

- To keep members informed of the progress of the Housing Department and major projects.

1 Report Details

- 1.1 This report should be read in conjunction with the attached statistical Appendix.
- 1.2 Recover of rent arrears remains challenging against a background of austerity and the impact of welfare reform
- 1.3 At a national level there is growing concern about the impact of Universal credit on rent accounts, especially when considered along with the increased trend to take sanctions against people who are not actively seeking work. As members will be aware, Universal Credit will be paid directly to the claimant and they will need to make their own arrangements to pay rent and other charges. If a person is subject to sanctions, while they will still receive the housing element of the payment evidence elsewhere would suggest that this payment is not always used to meet housing costs. Given that Universal Credit will be introduced in Bolsover prior to Christmas this is likely to have an increasing impact upon rent collection in the District.
- 1.4 To help with the increase in numbers of people in debt, the post of Money Advice Worker has recently been filled.
- 1.5 The two posts of Housing Assistants (Estates) have been filled. These officers will carry out an initial assessment of all the Council garage sites with a view of identifying alternative uses and addressing issues of ASB on the sites.
- 1.6 As reported to Council, the Department continues to work with Property Services to bring forward new sites for Council Housebuilding. Recent work has identified the next tranche of sites to be considered, but also identified areas where we have ambition to build, but there is a shortage of land. This will be subject to a future report to members.

- 1.7 Similarly work continues with Planning on the New Bolsover Project.
- 1.8 The empty homes project with Crestra is requiring a higher than anticipated level of managerial time. The properties are not at the same standard as the Council's own stock with the result that Council officers need to spend a disproportionate amount of time before the houses can be made available to tenants. The administration of these properties is further complicated by the fact that Groundwork has recently experienced significant turnover of staff resulting in a lack of continuity, and poor communication. The Council is investing significant time into the project with only a minimal return. Other Councils, including NEDDC, have reduced their role in the project to that of advertising properties with Crestra undertaking the management and repair function. It is recommended that Bolsover adopt this approach in order to streamline current arrangements and clarify roles and responsibilities..

2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation

- 2.1 That members not this report.

3 Consultation and Equality Impact

- 3.1 None

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 Not applicable

5 Implications

5.1 Finance and Risk Implications

None directly

5.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection

None directly

5.3 Human Resources Implications

None directly

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 That members note the progress and activities within the Housing Department.

- 6.2 That the Housing Department revise arrangements with Cresta with property management reverting to Groundwork, with Bolsover District Council advertising properties as requested.

7 Decision Information

Is the decision a Key Decision? (A Key Decision is one which results in income or expenditure to the Council of £50,000 or more or which has a significant impact on two or more District wards)	No
District Wards Affected	
Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework	

8 Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Quarterly Performance Reporting
Background Papers (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)	
Report Author	Contact Number
Assistant Director	

Report Reference –