

Minute Extract from the meeting of the Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee held on 18th April 2016

***. CALL IN OF EXECUTIVE MINUTE NO. 0821, NEW BOLSOVER – LOCAL LETTINGS POLICY**

The Chair presented the item and asked Councillor Crane to outline the reason for the Call In.

Councillor Crane asked for clarification of the words 'appropriate weight' in Executive recommendation 0821(1)(a). The Assistant Director – Community Safety and Head of Housing (BDC) explained that each person who wished to move permanently from New Bolsover would need to apply through the Choice Based Letting System. They would be awarded approximately 10 extra points which was the equivalent to the points awarded for sharing a bathroom and other facilities with non family members.

Councillor Crane noted that in his opinion, those persons from New Bolsover who wished for a permanent move should not be treated any differently to those who were already on the waiting list.

The Chair asked if there was a compromise that could be reached and Councillor Crane felt that removal of the words 'appropriate weight' and assurance that everyone on the waiting list be treated the same would be a good compromise.

The Assistant Director – Community Safety and Head of Housing (BDC) felt that there were a possible 7 to 10 households who would want to move away. Those with arrears would not be entitled to a permanent move.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and IT felt that they should be treated differently as the Council was going to carry out works to the properties which would cause major disruption. The same system had been used when the Tarran Bungalow schemes had been in place.

The Assistant Director – Community Safety and Head of Housing (BDC) noted that the idea had been proposed as it would help the Council. This was a multi million pound investment of local, regional and national importance. A number of empty properties in a block were needed before work could begin. It would also help tenants as the work would be very intrusive. Most tenants wanted to stay and benefit from the works, but some would find it difficult to cope e.g. those who worked night shifts, had breathing difficulties or young children. The works would cause a lot of inconvenience, therefore it was appropriate to award additional points. The Choice Based Letting system was very transparent. There was also the issue of cost as the Council was footing the bill for removal. If people only moved once, there would only be half the cost.

Councillor Crane congratulated the Authority on pulling the scheme together and obtaining the funding, but felt that giving extra points was not being fair to those already on the waiting list. Extra points were already given to people vacating a 3 bedroomed house for a smaller property. The costs of moving were built in to the cost of the scheme. People who lived on council estates all had to live with some level of disruption e.g. ambulances visiting sheltered accommodation. The cost of moving was built in to the scheme.

The Assistant Director of Community Safety and Head of Housing (BDC) noted that there was no comparison between occasional ambulance visits and a full 3 year building programme. The scheme would cost around £10 million and the HLF funding was for £2 million. The majority of the costs would be met from the Bolsover District Council HRA Account. Therefore, the Council had a responsibility to reduce the costs wherever possible.

Members felt that costs needed to be taken into account and asked why the total of 10 points had been chosen. The Assistant Director – Community Safety and Head of Housing (BDC) noted that it was hoped to give some priority, but not absolute priority. The number of points could be looked at, but awarding points ensured transparency.

A discussion took place and it was ascertained that if the matter was referred back to the Executive, it would be heard on 25th April 2016. The Assistant Director – Community Safety and Head of Housing (BDC) also pointed out that the original proposal was to have a ‘package’ where some people would move within Bolsover, some would return to their own home after using a temporary decant in New Bolsover and others would be rehoused elsewhere in the District. The proposal from Councillor Crane introduced a different option of using other properties for the period of the works. Doing this would cost the council in the region of £12,000 over three years in terms of lost rent.

Moved by Councillor D. McGregor and seconded by Councillor R. A. Heffer

RESOLVED that the matter be referred back to the Executive for reconsideration as the Committee did not think that it was fair that anyone who wanted to permanently move out of New Bolsover should be treated any differently to anyone already on the waiting list.

(Governance Officer)

