

Agenda Item No: 10

Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 2 April 2013

Report Title: Hastings Tenancy Strategy

Report By: Andrew Palmer
Head of Housing and Development

Purpose of Report

To advise Cabinet of the final tenancy strategy setting out the Council's views on how Registered Providers should implement their tenancy policies locally following 12 weeks consultation with Registered Providers

To seek approval to recommend the strategy is adopted at Cabinet

Recommendation(s)

- 1. That Cabinet approve the final tenancy strategy following a 12 week consultation with Registered Providers**

Reasons for Recommendations

The Localism Act (2011) introduces a requirement for all local authorities to publish a tenancy strategy for their areas setting out matters to which social landlords in their areas must have regard when determining their own policies.

The draft strategy was circulated with Registered Providers and stakeholders for comment within a 12 week consultation period which ended on 28 February 2013.

Introduction

1. The Localism Act requires local authorities to produce a tenancy strategy which must be in place by June 2013.
2. The Council must prepare and publish the strategy to outline the preferred approach to social and affordable tenancies offered by providers. Registered Providers (RPs) will be required to have regard to these strategies when shaping their own strategic tenancy policies.
3. It should be noted that the tenancy strategy is not binding upon RPs and due to conflicting central government timescales many RPs will have already implemented changes to ensure compliance with Homes and Communities Agency Affordable Housing Grant programme criteria.
4. A tenancy strategy is required so that partners are clear about the Council's aspirations for the letting of social housing locally. In preparing the tenancy strategy full account has been taken of the proposed revisions to the Council's Allocations Scheme also currently being considered.
5. Hastings Borough Council does not own its own stock of housing and therefore the tenancy policy will only be applicable to Registered Providers offering tenancies locally. It should be noted that whilst Registered Providers are required to have regard to the local authority tenancy strategy, they are not bound by it.
6. The legislation itself is clear about the things that the tenancy strategy must cover. These are:
 - What kind of tenancy to offer
 - The circumstances in which the landlord will grant a tenancy of a particular kind
 - Where tenancy is for a set term, the length of the term
 - The circumstances in which the landlord will grant a further tenancy on the ending of the existing tenancy.
7. A review of current tenancy arrangements has been carried out county wide with all housing authorities and key registered providers. A framework document has been drawn up in order to ensure that all main housing providers make similar offers to tenants where they operate across local authority boundaries. It should be noted that it is considered impractical by Registered Providers to operate wholly different policies across the various local authority areas in which they let stock.
8. This framework has been used to inform and develop individual strategies for each local authority area.

The Hastings Tenancy Strategy

9. The Hastings tenancy strategy aims to reflect local pressures and priorities by:

- Supporting economic growth and ensuring that average incomes are not a barrier to accessing social housing, but that those on higher incomes who can afford to meet their own housing need are encouraged to do so
 - Encouraging a wide range of housing options to support households at different stages in their lives and with different levels of income
 - Making best use of the available social housing stock including reducing overcrowding, tackling under-occupation and making best use of adapted housing for those with a disability
 - Ensuring that vulnerable households are able to access appropriate accommodation and where needed ensure that accommodation is available for life
 - Maximising choice for applicants within the available resources, promoting mobility within social housing and between social housing and other housing tenures
10. The Hastings Tenancy Strategy reflects the framework document and in summary the tenancy strategy seeks to ensure social housing tenancies are:
- Affordable
 - Either assured or fixed term tenancies with a minimum term of 5 years
 - Granted to older people for life
 - Reviewed 6 months in advance of the fixed term coming to an end and in consultation with the local authority
 - Only terminated when the household is no longer eligible for social housing, where there has been a breach of tenancy or where the property is no longer suitable. (Properties are no longer suitable when a household is under occupying or where an adapted unit is no longer needed. In these cases the landlord would be expected to facilitate an offer of alternative accommodation).

Consultation

11. Consultation with partner agencies and stakeholders took place in February 2012 and a working group with representation from BHT, Amicus Horizon, Orbit and Homeworks have considered the attached document.
12. The East Sussex Framework document was subject to full consultation with the Registered Providers working in East Sussex.
13. A draft tenancy strategy was shared with all Registered Providers working in the Borough during a 12 week consultation period which ended on 28 February 2013.
14. No objections on the policy direction content of the tenancy strategy were received and the draft strategy has not been changed.

Wards Affected

Ashdown, Baird, Braybrooke, Castle, Central St. Leonards, Conquest, Gensing, Hollington, Maze Hill, Old Hastings, Ore, Silverhill, St. Helens, Tressell, West St. Leonards, Wishing Tree

Area(s) Affected

Central Hastings, East Hastings, North St. Leonards, South St. Leonards

Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	No
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	No
Risk Management	No
Environmental Issues	No
Economic/Financial Implications	No
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	No
Local People's Views	No

Background Information

Appendix 1 - Hastings tenancy strategy
Appendix 2 - Glossary

Officer to Contact

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Appendix 2 Glossary could not be published in this area of the Council's website because of the complex images that they contain. They are available in another area of the site and may be accessed via the following link:-

http://www.hastings.gov.uk/decisions_democracy/how_we_make_decisions/constitution_commitees/cabinet/