



To: Executive Councillor for Housing (and Deputy Leader): Councillor Catherine Smart
Report by: Alan Carter
Relevant scrutiny committee: Housing Management Board 19/6/2012
Wards affected: All Wards

COUNCIL NEW BUILD HOUSING PROGRAMME - IMPACT ON EXISTING RESIDENTS
Not a Key Decision

1. Executive summary

The Council has taken the opportunity to establish a new Council house building programme. Eight new homes have been completed to-date and funding has secured from the Homes and Communities Agency to build another 146 by the end of March 2015. The City Homes Business Plan 2012 to 2042 indicates the financial potential to provide a further 500 new homes over the next ten to fifteen years. In some cases the new build programme involves the demolition of existing housing.

A number of reports have been produced and considered mainly by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee to achieve the necessary approvals to implement the Council house building programme. The reports included approval of a Home Loss Policy that sets out the Council's approach to recompensing residents, both tenants and leaseholders, who will be required to move out of their home to allow the new build programme to happen.

This report does not repeat the detail of previous reports but concentrates on the impact on the residents who are required to move.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended:

To note the approach taken to re-house residents' whose current homes are to be demolished under the Council New Build Housing Programme

3. Background

The 3 Year Rolling Programme and Consultation

The Council has established a 3 Year Rolling Programme of sites that it wishes the feasibility and viability to be assessed for development for new Council housing or redevelopment where there is existing housing. A report is taken to Community Services Scrutiny Committee every year to report on the feasibility and viability for development of sites in the 3 Year Rolling Programme and to request that approval be given to investigate new sites.

When a new site added to the 3 Year Rolling Programme includes existing homes, all existing residents are written to immediately and officer contact details are provided for further information. If it is anticipated that existing residents affected may be vulnerable in any way then letters are hand delivered by officers to provide an immediate opportunity to discuss the matter.

If a site does not contain existing housing but has housing adjacent that may be directly impacted by any new development, a letter may be sent to the residents but this is managed at officer discretion. In other cases the feasibility of redeveloping of a garage block may be being looked at. In this case the tenants of the garages will be written to.

In most cases the assessment of the feasibility and viability of development or redevelopment of a site is a 'desk-top' exercise involving the examination of site condition; access issues; planning policy; costs of site clearance and construction etc. Occasionally an early consultation meeting may be set up if there are particular issues that impact on the development of a site. A recent example is where a community consultation meeting was held in relation to the St Matthews Street Garages site.

Specific Scheme Approval

Once officers have assessed that it is feasible and viable to develop or redevelop a site then specific approval to proceed with a scheme is requested from the Executive Councillor for Housing following consideration of a report by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee.

Immediately following specific approval by the Executive Councillor for Housing and where there is existing housing on the site, letters will be hand delivered to the residents. The letters will include details of the decision and will provide information on the how residents will be supported to secure alternative accommodation and their entitlement to compensation under the Home Loss Policy. If the resident is at home when the letter is hand delivered they will be invited to discuss the content of the letter there and

then. If the resident is not at home, officer contact details are shown in the letter.

For example, four housing officers were involved in delivering letters to the residents at the flats in Latimer Close that have been approved for redevelopment in early October 2011. Four residents were at home and officers had the chance to talk through the details in the letter with these people. All bar one of the other residents made contact quickly following the delivery of the letters. One tenant has not responded to any requests for contact and is believed not to be living at the address any more. Notice of Seeking Possession is to be served. To-date nine of the remaining fifteen tenants have been rehoused and the remainder are actively bidding for housing that becomes available, some directly themselves and others with the support of a housing officer. There are four leaseholders, one resident and three non-resident, and all have engaged with a view to the Council being given vacant possession by the end of October 2012.

It should be noted that the above does not remove the formal requirement to consult local residents as part of the planning process.

Re-housing Options and Rents

As tenants are being required to move-on from their existing homes they are provided a Band A status under Home-Link. However, in all other respects the Lettings Policy conditions apply eg a single person will not be able to bid for a three bedroom house. In all cases to-date at Latimer Close tenants have moved to alternative one bedroom flats with City Homes apart from one tenant who has a child and has been re-housed in a two bedroom house. The opportunity to move back to the site once it has been redeveloped is offered to residents but to-date at Latimer Close, for example, no-one has exercised that option. Where residents want to move back they are clearly informed that under the Home Loss Policy they are not entitled to Home Loss Payment (currently £4,700) but are entitled to Disturbance Payments to cover both moves (Disturbance Payments can vary depending on the circumstances of individual resident and the type of property they are moving to and from. For example, Disturbance Payments can cover the cost of re-carpeting the new home if this is a reasonable request. The cost of this will depend on the size of the new home and the extent of the carpeting required).

If a tenant transfers to another City Homes property they will pay the social rent for that property. If a tenant exercises the option to move back to property on the redeveloped site they will pay the new Affordable Rent for that property.

Where a leaseholder is resident in the property that is to be redeveloped advice is given on how they may secure alternative housing for sale (Home Loss Payment is 110% of market value for resident leaseholders and 107.5% for non-resident leaseholders). At Latimer Close for example, as the market value of the flats are relatively low, advice has been provided on shared ownership as an alternative. In cases where resident leaseholders can demonstrate that they cannot access alternative market housing they will be eligible to register on Home-link for alternative rented housing.

Non-resident leaseholders are not supported to secure alternative housing options although they are entitled to have their reasonable costs covered in securing an alternative 'investment' property.

Tenants of non-resident leaseholders are offered the same advice as other tenants living in the private rented sector whose tenancies are coming to an end.

Right to Buy

Under the Right to Buy regulations the Council is able to issue an 'Initial Demolition Notice' at any time if a property is being considered for redevelopment. Once such a notice is issued, the Council is not obliged to complete any Right to Buy sale. To-date this has not been an issue but it has recently been agreed at officer level that it would be an appropriate procedure to issue Initial Demolition Notices once scheme specific approval has been given to redevelop a site.

4. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications in respect of the content of this report that has not been covered by previous reports considered by Committees.

(b) Staffing Implications

Staff capacity to manage the consultations outlined in the report and to support residents to secure alternative housing will need to be monitored as and when schemes are brought forward. To-date these are being managed within existing staffing levels.

(c) Equal Opportunities Implications

In undertaking an Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment in respect of the Home Loss Policy it was recognised that individual tenants and leaseholders will require different degrees of support to move. In particular

- Older people
- Tenants with physical and/or learning impairment
- Tenants for whom English is not their first language

In respect of the Council new build programme in general, it is recognised that as the Council owns the land this provides a better opportunity to meet the needs of some people who have more specific housing and support needs that may be harder to meet on s106 sites.

(d) **Environmental Implications**

There are no direct environmental implications in respect of the content of this report that has not been covered by previous reports considered by Committees. It should be noted however that the residents of the new housing on the sites that are to be redeveloped will benefit from lower fuel bills as the new homes will have high standards of thermal insulation and efficient heating and hot water systems.

(e) **Consultation**

Please see the main body of the report.

(f) **Community Safety**

There are no direct community safety implications in respect of the content of this report that has not been covered by previous reports considered by Committees.

5. Background papers

Home Loss Policy

6. Appendices

None

7. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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