

Policy Advisory Group

26 February 2016

Report to Cabinet

Purpose of the Meeting

The purpose of the meeting was to consider and explore potential opportunities to amend Gateshead Council's lettings policy, with a view to increasing the sustainability of tenancies and making Council housing easier to access for potential appropriate new customers.

Summary of Advice:

- How will we assess tenants for Pay to Stay?
- Can we not manage our housing stock in a different way, if the government force us to sell off the higher value stock we are going to be left with the cheaper tenure/low turnover stock. We may just end up as a dumping ground of poor stock.
- Lot of competition from right to buy properties and this is only going to get worse.
- Is there anything we can do about absentee landlords as they also seem to be on the increase.
- It is easier for people to just walk in and get a private rent and we cannot compete with this.
- We need to look at inherited tenancies too – will await the legislation on this with interest.
- The principle of succession with good families should be encouraged.
- Could we asset transfer the communal lounges?
- Could we look at different ways of marketing the communal lounges?
- Is there a potential to provide play provision where there has been none before to encourage more families ie multi storey flats.
- Could we look at lifting the age restriction on some properties ie bungalows and some flats.
- What type of property is the biggest problem for us. Could we market test increasing the push for these hard to let properties for a limited time as a trial?

- We have to acknowledge that family dynamics are not what they were and we need to look at adapting our policy to take this into account. Many parents live apart and share custody of children.
- Can we look at allowing pets into flats if this was proving to be a barrier to letting the property.
- There are direct links to poor housing and poor mental health and we need to look at this as a matter of course.
- Increasing sustainability and reducing administration should be also a priority – how much time is wasted on people who never come back or do not provide us with the correct information from the outset.
- Changes in policies need to be done asap and brought back here on 23 March 2016 for consideration.

Chair: J Turnbull

Members Present: Councillors J Hamilton, L Caffrey, L Twist, C McHugh

Officers Present: Lisa Philliskirk –Housing Services Manager
Kevin Johnson – Head of Customer Services, TGHC
Jon Mallen-Beadle – Managing Director TGHC
Jackie Armstrong – Customer Services Manager TGHC
Helen Conway - Corporate Services and Governance