
OVERVIEW OF ADULTS AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Adults and Housing Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

Amendments to the Local Letting Policy

2. We have been given the opportunity to comment on proposals to change the Council's current local lettings policy which are being proposed in the light of significant changes in demand for Council housing.
3. The proposed change is to allow applicants over the age of 18 to apply for flats above ground floor and a reduction in the age of ground floor properties to 55 years. This change does not apply to the Council's seven fully comprehensive sheltered housing schemes and the three Extra Care schemes.
4. In considering the proposed change, we heard from one of the Councillors from the North Road Ward who spoke on behalf of a number of residents from flats within his Ward who had concerns about the proposal to allow applicants over the age of 18 to apply for flats above ground floor and the reasons for those concerns. He also made us aware of the results of a survey undertaken by the three Ward Councillors for that Ward which produced a 90 per cent 'no' response when directly asked the question 'Do you agree that young people of 18 plus should be allowed to rent first floor flats'. We did question the result of the survey based on the question which was asked, however, we have asked Officers to respond directly, where names and addresses were provided, to those concerns raised.
5. We also heard from a resident of North Road who had similar concerns about the proposal in relation to younger people and a representative of the North Riverside Tenants Association who questioned the suitability of the fabric of those flats to accommodate young people.
6. Although we listened to the concerns raised at the meeting, we did take into account the number of complaints concerning tenants living in flats which was broken down into age groups and which amounted to only about two per cent of the Council housing stock; the vetting process that took place when an application for housing was made, including the provision of a Housing Plus, a new service which introduces a new level of vetting to identify tenants who are at a higher risk of breaching their tenancy agreements; techniques used to deal with issues between tenants, including arbitration and the role of the Tenancy Enforcement Team and we felt that we could support the proposed changes, although we will be monitoring how the Policy is working.

Supreme Court Judgement

7. We have been advised of the outcome of a recent Supreme Court decision in relation to Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) and the implications for this Council.
8. Following the judgement, there is now a new 'acid test' which sets out what amounts to a deprivation of liberty and this will mean that a significant amount of individuals will now be deprived of their liberty. The test applies to all adults over the age of 18 who lack mental capacity and also applies to children aged 16-18 who lack mental capacity. This will result in more authorisations being needed and more applications to the Court of Protection and will impact on the local authority, as the Supervisory Body.
9. To give some idea of the scale of impact, we were advised that, from 1st March until 22nd May, 2013, the Council received 16 requests for authorisations under the DoLS process and that from 1st March to 22nd May, 2014, 156 requests had been received with a potential 140 cases identified that need further consideration about whether an application for authorisation to the Court of Protection was needed. This has resulted in significant staffing and budgetary implications as the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services estimate that the true cost of a DoLS authorisation assessment is approximately £1000 with the fees associated with an application to the Court of Protection being £400 application fee and a £500 hearing fee.
10. Staff are currently working to identify of all those who are likely to be affected by the judgement and which route of authorisation is needed.
11. Again, we will monitor the impact of this.

Review of RIACT

12. Scrutiny was given an update on a review of RIACT which has recently been undertaken by Commissioners from the Local Authority and the North East Commissioning Support Unit. Although the review has now largely been completed, there are some sections still outstanding and we were advised that further analysis needs to be undertaken in order to fully understand the outcomes for individuals, cost implications and the performance objectives for the two organisations
13. The Review was required as part of the whole system work included in the Better Care Fund and the next steps are for a fuller understanding of the work of the intermediate care function, reablement and the development of the multi-disciplinary integrated teams and we will receive regular reports and updates regarding the progress on RIACT, Multi-disciplinary working, the Care Act and the Better Care Fund.

Medication in Care Homes

14. As part of the work which is being undertaken through a Task and Finish Review Group with Members of the Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee, we have received an update on the current position in relation to the progress of the Medication in Care Homes work. A final report will be submitted to the next ordinary meeting of our Committee scheduled for 21st October 2014.

Work Programme

15. We have reviewed and revised our work programme and have included the items which we agreed to continue to monitor as outlined above.
16. We have also agreed to assist with a piece of work being undertaken by the Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee in relation to End of Life Care.
17. The main focus for our next meeting in October will be to monitor how the performance indicators within the remit of our Scrutiny Committee are performing and contributing to the eight key objectives and overall vision of the Sustainable Community Strategy. A request has also been made to look specifically at the performance of the Housing Management indicators.

Councillor Bryan Thistlethwaite
Chair of Adults and Housing Scrutiny Committee