

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19 January 2010

ACCESS TO HOUSING POLICY REVIEW – PROGRESS REPORT

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: SP1: Prosperous City; SP5: Attractive and Inclusive City

CORPORATE PRIORITIES: CIO1: Delivering Customer Focused Services, CIO3: Efficient and Effective Council; CIO4: Improving Partnership Working to Deliver ‘One City’.

1. Why has this report come to the Committee?

- 1.1 The report provides members with progress on the committee's policy review around access to housing in Sunderland.
- 1.2 The report also provides an opportunity for members to discuss the theme of sub –regional Choice Based Lettings with Tyne and Wear Housing Partnership and Shelter.

2. Background

- 2.1 Following the initial scoping of the policy review at the committee's meeting held on 22nd September 2009, Members have commenced their evidence gathering in relation to Access to Housing in Sunderland. A number of focus groups have already been conducted and further focus groups and evidence gathering is still to take place.

3. Current position

- 3.1 At the last committee meeting held on 15 December 2009, members had the opportunity to discuss issues around the policy review theme with Councillor Trueman, the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Communities.
- 3.2 A working group meeting had been arranged for Thursday 14 January 2010. This working group meeting was with some of the numerous private landlords that operate across the city. A random sample of landlords were invited to attend and provide another viewpoint to the policy review. A verbal update on the meeting and the key themes that emerged will be provided by the Scrutiny Officer at the meeting.

- 3.3 Work continues in arranging the visit of Stephen Rudge from Coventry City Council as part of the policy review. Members should make a note that Stephen is expected to be in Sunderland on Thursday 28th January and arrangements are being finalised to ensure the committee and the council get the maximum benefit from his visit.
- 3.4 Also attached for members information at Appendix 1 is a presentation around sub-regional choice based lettings (CBL), from the Tyne and Wear Housing Partnership, Mr Barry Lowther, will provide members with information relating to this presentation.
- 3.5 The presentation looks at the development and benefits of a sub-regional CBL scheme as well as progress so far, options and next steps in the process.
- 3.6 There will also be the opportunity to discuss these issues with Shelter. The organisation was founded in England in 1966 by the Reverend Bruce Kenrick, who was horrified by the state of the tenements round his Notting Hill parish. The setting up of the organisation in Scotland followed in 1968. Shelter is a charity that works to alleviate the distress caused by homelessness and bad housing. This is done by giving advice, information and advocacy to people in housing need, and by campaigning for lasting political change to end the housing crisis for good.
- 3.7 Also attached at Appendix 2, for members information, of this report is an updated timetable for the policy review.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The information received around a sub-regional CBL scheme will provide useful evidence as part of the committee's policy review into access to housing.

5 Recommendation

- 5.1 That Members note and comment on the information provided.

6. Glossary

CBL – Choice Based Lettings

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