

## Growth & Prosperity Scrutiny Panel

Held on Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022 at 6:00pm in The Salford Suite, Civic Centre, Chorley Road, Swinton.

### Present:

Councillor Sharpe - in the Chair  
Councillors Brabiner, Humphreys, Pevitt and Tetteh

Councillor Kelly - Statutory Deputy City Mayor and Lead Member for Housing, Property & Regeneration

### Officers:

Julie Craik - Service Manager - Strategy  
Jane Anderson - Head of Housing Advice and Support  
Claire Edwards - Democratic Services

### In attendance via MS Teams:

Councillor Cusack - Executive Support Member for Skills, Work & Business

## 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Brooks, Davies, R. Garrido, Lewis, Nelson, Shama and Ward.

## 2. Declarations of interest

Councillor Kelly declared an interest in agenda item 3 (Housing Allocations in Salford) as a director of Derive.

Councillor Brabiner made reference to being a tenant of a housing association property in Salford.

## 3. Housing Allocations in Salford

Julie Craik and Jane Anderson gave a presentation regarding Housing Allocations in Salford which included reference to the following:

- Legislation/Guidance
- Key Legislation
  - Housing Act 1996
  - Localism Act 2011
- Social Housing need and demand remains consistently high
- Severe shortage of available social housing
- Need to manage expectations
- If this were a waiting list what would the average wait be?
- Accessible/adapted housing is in even greater shorter supply
- Eligibility and qualification
- Categorising applications
- Points Based System – General Needs and Accessible Needs Accommodation
- Shortlisting of bids
  - General housing Needs Category
  - Accessible Accommodation Category
  - Statutory Homelessness Category
- Offers
- Question for panel:  
The allocations policy prioritises homelessness over those threatened with homelessness - so that homeless applicants (with a Relief Duty) are housed before those threatened with homelessness (with a Prevention Duty).

However, this:

- Reduces ability to prevent homelessness in the first place
- Results in continued high numbers of homeless applicants
- Results in continued high numbers who require temporary accommodation
- Results in significant cost for the provision of temporary accommodation
- Results in significant impacts on households, families and children

Do panel members have any comments about this current approach and whether a focus on prevention in the policy, instead, would be more appropriate?

Discussion took place which included reference to the following:

- Anti-social behaviour and processes that are in place to manage such behaviour. Reference was made to prospective tenants being required to provide landlord references.
- A maximum of two offers of suitable housing being made – should both offers be declined then no further offer would be made. Reference was made to Homelessness Law, under which housing duty ended after one offer of suitable housing.

Concern was expressed regarding the limit of two offers, rather than three, as it was possible that offers deemed to be suitable by officers may not actually be suitable to the specific circumstances of a particular person/family.

- The importance of making the above-mentioned limit of two offers as clear as possible to those seeking accommodation, in order to ensure that the consequences of a decision to decline an offer are fully understood. It was confirmed that this information was available on the website and that in cases involving homelessness, an officer from the Housing Options Team would make contact with the person concerned and set out the consequences of their decision to decline the offer.
- Councillor Kelly made reference to the desperate shortage of affordable housing in Salford, particularly in the most desirable parts of the city. She referred to the number of properties available in such areas having reduced as a result of the Right to Buy scheme, and to new affordable housing developments often not being located in places where people wish to live. Reference was made to the need to manage expectations and encourage people to think outside the box and be open to the possibility of moving to a new area, although it was acknowledged that this could be difficult, particularly for those wishing to remain in a particular area due to children attending school, or due to receiving support from family and friends with issues such as childcare.
- The process involved in bidding for properties.  
It was noted that it is not possible to bid for accommodation with less bedrooms than a family requires in order to obtain a property in a particular area.  
Concern was expressed regarding the ability of people without IT knowledge or experience, particularly older people, to undertake the bidding process – it was indicated that an officer would bid on their behalf in such circumstances.
- The continued availability of house exchanges and the process involved.
- Turnaround time in terms of how long it takes for a property that has become vacant to be re-let. It was indicated that targets in terms of re-letting properties were set by the registered providers operating in the city.
- The availability of land being a big issue in terms of building new affordable housing in the city.
- The possibility of some of the registered providers operating in the city being invited to provide an update on their achievements and challenges at a future meeting of the panel.

- Private rented sector housing in the city – reference was made to the work undertaken by Kate Atkinson, Principal Officer Housing Choice & Support.
- Information regarding the types of issues taken into account when allocating temporary accommodation.
- Properties provided by Derive being available at both social and affordable rent.
- The role of credit unions.
- Concern regarding situations where less expensive family housing had been purchased and converted into a HMO (House in Multiple Occupation) and was not being properly managed. Reference was made to Landlord Licensing and its role in ensuring that HMOs are safe and well managed.
- The role of HMOs in terms of the provision of affordable housing for those unable to afford alternative accommodation.
- The best way for Elected Members to support their tenants being to help manage their expectations and to help them understand that the locations in which they apply for housing can limit their ability to be allocated a property. Reference was made to a Fact Sheet that was currently being produced for Elected Members and MPs which would be circulated once available.
- In response to the above question to the Panel, Members agreed that whilst changing the focus to those threatened with homelessness would be effective in terms of preventing homelessness, it would not be appropriate to do so at the expense of addressing the desperate needs of those in crisis situations.

RESOLVED: (1) THAT the content of the presentation and comments be noted with thanks to the officers involved for the work that was being undertaken.

(2) THAT an item regarding an update from registered providers on their achievements / challenges be included on the work programme for consideration at a future meeting.

#### **4. Minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022**

The minutes of the above meeting were agreed as a correct record.

#### **5. Work Programme**

RESOLVED: THAT the work programme be noted, subject to the above-mentioned item recorded under Minute 3(2) being included for consideration at a future meeting.

#### **6. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2022 at 6:00pm in the Salford Suite, Salford Civic Centre.