
EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 11 OCTOBER 2012

COSP.69/12 TENANCY STRATEGY

The Director of Community Engagement (Mr Gerrard) submitted report CD.46/12 regarding the publication of the City Council's Tenancy Strategy.

The Communities, Housing and Health Manager (Ms Miller) reported that the Localism Act, 2011 introduced a programme of reform which would change the way people accessed social housing, the way tenancies were issued and the way homelessness duty was discharged.

Carlisle City Council was required to publish a Tenancy Strategy by 15 January 2013 to provide the framework for the delivery of new affordable homes, and to set out the broad objectives that registered providers must have regard to when developing or reviewing their own tenancy policies.

Ms Miller explained that the Tenancy Strategy outlined the areas of the City Council's housing and homelessness functions which the Tenancy Strategy covered. She added that a summary of the Council's position on each of the areas was contained in the report.

She informed the Panel that there was a requirement to consult on the document with key partners and the three month consultation period began on 31 August until 23 November 2012.

In considering the Strategy Members raised the following comments and concerns:

- Would there be any flexibility in the application of the under occupancy rules?

Ms Miller explained that the Government's position with regard to under occupancy was clear and how it was implemented and the application of the policy would be for the local providers to determine.

- Was there a strategy in place to deal with the increasing population in Cumbria?

Ms Miller informed the Panel that Cumbria County Council were in the process of producing an Extra Care Strategy which dealt with the ageing population.

- What were the rent levels for social rents, affordable rents and marketable rents?

Ms Miller agreed to submit the response in writing to all Members of the Panel.

- Did the City Council use private landlords to accommodate homeless people?

Ms Miller replied that private bed and breakfasts had been used on occasion but it would depend on who was presenting and their circumstances. There had been a reduction in the use of private landlords this year compared to previous years.

- There were concerns that the Welfare Reform could cause an increase in those presenting as homeless and therefore put pressure on the Council's accommodation. Could the Council do anything to influence an improvement in the standards of private accommodation in case there was a need to use private accommodation?

Ms Millar responded that the Homelessness Section were aware of the potential increase in homelessness and, in response, had increased the resources in the prevention team. The prevention team were focused on working with partners and agencies to prevent homelessness.

- In response to questions 6 and 7 as set out in report CD.46/12 the Panel suggested that there be no change to the current access to the Cumbria Choice housing register.

RESOLVED – That the Panel endorsed the Tenancy Strategy as set out in report CD.46/12.