MINUTES OF HOUSING STOCK AND HOUSING NEED TASK GROUP

12TH JULY 2011

PRESENT:

Councillors Cranham, Ms Edwards, G Francis, Gillias, Mahoney, Ms Robbins, Srivastava and Mrs Watson

Steven Shanahan (Head of Housing), Michelle Dickson (Housing Community Development Team Leader), Liz Dunlop (Operational Housing Manager), Paul Ansell (Scrutiny and Policy Officer) and Veronika Beckova (Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer)

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED THAT – Councillor Mrs Watson be appointed Chairman of the Task Group for the 2011/12 municipal year.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillors Coles and Roodhouse.

3. INTRODUCTORY PRESENTATION BY THE HEAD OF HOUSING

The Task Group received an overview from the Head of Housing and the Housing and Community Development Team Leader concerning the council’s housing stock and the housing needs. A copy of the presentation is attached at Annex 1 to the minutes.

Further to the briefing note and presentation, the following points were made, although they do no necessarily all represent the views of the whole group:

- In the past, accommodation was built mainly for families and older people.
- Future needs cannot be established if the current stock is not fully reviewed.
- Popular parts of Rugby have higher demand for council housing.
- There is more need for smaller accommodation for single people with or without children.
- Rugby is not an exception regarding unbalanced housing stock.
- A recent newspaper article had highlighted a national problem of more middle-aged people losing their jobs and applying for social housing for the first time, though there was no information on the situation in Rugby available to the meeting.
- The right-to-buy exaggerated the imbalance of the housing stock, but a few right-to-buy sales are now taking place.
- Any new stock should not be designed for a specific age group.
- Retain housing stock in rural areas, particularly where there is a group of housing for older people, which makes visiting by carers easier.
- The number of 16-25-year-olds applying for housing is increasing.
• The Asset Management Strategy is in place and this review was just one part of managing the council’s housing assets.
• 48% of the housing stock is occupied by 60+ age group tenants: 37% in housing designated for older people and 11% in general-needs housing.
• Numbers of older people will increase in the future.
• The number of care homes is reducing significantly. The current approach is to help the elderly to live more independently in their own homes with the help of carers.
• Elderly people remain within their community where they are happier and feel safer and more independent which is also easier for carers.
• In future, elderly people might want to live in a different way, and the current type of accommodation will no longer satisfy their needs.
• 16-18-year-olds and younger teenage parents’ housing needs belong under the remit of Warwickshire County Council. Their needs are supported in different ways.
• We need data to establish the pattern of where older people are living, using Anite and GIS mapping, together with data from housing associations if they will provide it.
• Not all people in need of housing are registered as they feel that the properties advertised are not what they need or they feel that they stand no chance of being housed.
• Allocation of the housing stock to applicants depends on their requirements.
• The provisions of the Localism Bill will include the power to grant short term tenancies.
• If a property becomes unsuitable for a particular group of people, its rent-earning life could be extended in the short term by letting it to a different group that was in housing need.
• We should consider refurbishing properties that are void for an extended period of time.
• There is no obvious street homelessness in Rugby but there are a number of people of no fixed abode (often known as ‘sofa-surfers’).
• The Housing Options Team is undergoing a full end-to-end review to introduce new ways of working with applicants.
• We need to collect data on hard- and easy-to-let properties, popular areas and the current applicants’ waiting list.

A copy of the presentation is attached at Annex 1 to the minutes.

4. ONE PAGE STRATEGY

The Task Group considered its one page strategy.

The following comments were made:

• ‘Unreasonable’ ambition – the Customer and Partnerships Committee had asked that the word ‘unreasonable’ be deleted from the heading of the third section of the one page strategy. In addition to this, it was agreed to remove the words “and exactly.”

• Who to consult – CUSP had asked that council tenants be involved. However, tenant data (age groups, housing preferences, etc) collected through housing questionnaires and UChoose might be sufficient for the review; in which case tenants will not need to be involved.
The Corporate Performance Committee had asked that information from the LI209 performance indicator on average relet times be used in the review. However, the Head of Housing expressed his belief that the outcome of this indicator conflicted with his understanding of the average void times from 2010/11, which, at 30 days, was two days over the target of 28.

5. WIDER INVOLVEMENT

The Task Group discussed wider involvement in relation to CUSP’s decision that a range of other organisations, tenants and members should be involved. The scrutiny officer reminded the task group that the community engagement mapping template from the Community Engagement Toolkit should be referred to when planning such involvement.

It was not clear whether such involvement would add anything to the data that the council already possessed. One option would be to hold a select committee style meeting at the end of the review to consult on its findings.

It was agreed to consider the need for outside involvement on a meeting-by-meeting basis.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

The Task Group considered its programme of work and dates of future meetings.

A meeting will be scheduled in late August or early September to take part in a discussion on what ‘fair’ looks like, followed by a further meeting on where we are now in relation to this.

CHAIRMAN
Matching the housing stock to needs

Rugby Borough Council’s Housing Service
12 July 2011
Background

• Rugby’s housing stock was built for a different age
• The demographics are changing
• We decide how we let our homes
• We have the power to re-designate homes
• Meeting housing needs is a corporate priority
Scrutiny multi-storey review

Members said that:

“The council should review its stock profile and reconfigure the accommodation available as necessary in order to ensure it meets housing needs more adequately.”
Wider environment

- People’s aspirations are changing and we cannot let some of our homes easily
- Yet housing need for some is very high in Rugby
- Times for some are getting harder, such as singles under 35
- Many homes can’t be adapted as the tenant ages
- More independence for housing under Housing Revenue Account reform focuses the mind
Some considerations

• This work links to the sheltered housing review: do we need as much sheltered housing in a more diverse housing market?

• This is not a review of housing in its totality, so focus will be needed.

• This review is only one part of managing the council’s housing assets

• Any proposed changes will be slow: we are dealing with people and their homes
This isn’t about points and bands

- This review is high-level and strategic
- It does not cover the allocations policy
- If the discussion turns to points and bands, we have moved off the point
- A focus on groups and whether we are letting to groups fairly is the job in hand – relative fairness between groups: not between people
Examples of ‘Hard-to-Lets’

• Some of the hardest to let properties are located in Patterdale and Pettiver

• Average void Pettiver 2010-11 = 66 days

• Income loss £5,056 on 10 properties

• Average void Patterdale 2010-11 = 94 days

• Income loss £4,771 on 9 properties

• Continued upward trend in 2011-12

• Target of 28 days’ voids missed by 2 days
## Breakdown of RBC stock profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property type</th>
<th>General needs</th>
<th>Older people</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bed-sit</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-bed bungalow</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-bed bungalow</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-bed flat</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>1,011</td>
<td>1,231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-bed flat / mais</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-bed flat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-bed house</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-bed house</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-bed house</td>
<td>1,225</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-bed + house</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,491</td>
<td>1,441</td>
<td>3,932</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What does the waiting list tell us?

• The proportion of one-person households on the housing register is significantly higher than in the wider population: if we do nothing, this will grow.

• There is a far higher proportion of 16 to 24 year olds and a far smaller proportion of over 60s on the housing register than that which reflects the wider population.

• The historical focus of local authority provision has been on social housing for families and older people, hence a shortage of social housing for younger single people.
Let’s turn to some maps
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CUSTOMER AND INFORMATION SERVICES

Percentage of LA Stock Available to Single People Under 50 (%)
The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2008) – what does that tell us?

• Rugby is projected to be home to 46,111 households by 2026

• out of these households, 36.5% will be one-person households

• this compares with 28% as at the 2001 census. The projection is 16,831 one-person households by 2026
The overall picture in terms of supply and demand:

- The high-rise blocks are an important contributor to meeting the housing needs of single people in Rugby.
- 1,416 units (36%) of the council’s stock is for single people.
- Single people under 50 have access to only around 8% of the total stock.
- 12% of the general needs stock (296 dwellings) and 78% (1,120 units) of the sheltered stock are available to single people.
Next steps?

• What does ‘fair’ look like? Numbers that better reflect the percentage of each group in the general population? What about who lives in the more popular parts of Rugby?

• How unfair is the way we allocate? How fair is it reasonable to get?

• How do we move to fairer and what obstacles and considerations are in the way?

  *Recommend we take each stage in turn*
Any questions?