MINUTES OF HOUSING STOCK AND HOUSING NEED TASK GROUP

7 FEBRUARY 2012

PRESENT:

Members of Task Group:

Councillors Coles, Cranham, Ms Edwards, Gillias, Ms Robbins, Roodhouse, Srivastava and Mrs Watson (Chairman)

Officers:

Steven Shanahan (Head of Housing), Liz Dunlop (Operational Housing Manager), John Hier (Housing and Regeneration Manager), Helen Short (Housing Officer), Ken Bruno (Research Officer), Paul Ansell (Scrutiny and Policy Officer) and Veronika Beckova (Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer)

15. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2011 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

16. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence from the meeting was received from Councillor Mahoney.

17. PRESENTATION ON HOUSING NEEDS OF SPECIFIC GROUPS

The Task Group received a presentation from the Research Officer. A copy of the presentation is attached at Annex 1 to the minutes. An information digest was circulated to members in advance.

In the first 15 minutes of the meeting members examined maps showing:

- Council housing stock profile in the urban area;
- Council and housing association stock profile in the urban area; and
- Council and housing association stock profile across the whole borough.

Three main questions were highlighted:

- What housing does the Council have?
- Who wants it?
- How well is the stock balanced?

Further to the presentation, the following comments were made:

- The Council owns 3944 properties of which 1444 are sheltered housing.
- In special circumstances properties with a minimum age condition are let to people under 50.
- 17 per cent of sheltered housing is already occupied by residents younger than 60 which equates to six per cent of the entire stock.
Key statistics – people, age bands and spikes:
- 40 – 49 – borough population spike
- 60 – 69 – council tenants spike
- 20 – 29 – applicants spike
- 60 – 69 – single applicants spike

Applicants have various levels of need and once these needs are assessed they are split into five bands.
The UChoose system has been active for approximately 18 months. Applicants are responsible for their own expression of interest on a property. Applicants not expressing an interest within a period of time are being removed from the system.
The Housing Option Team is undergoing an end-to-end review which has raised several questions on the effectiveness of UChoose.
31 per cent of the stock is three-bed houses while only 14 per cent of registered applicants want or qualify for this type of property.
To even out the stock and to house more applicants, one option is to change the eligibility criteria for three-bed houses and open them up to applicants who want a two-bed house or a two-bed flat. This in turn could enable some people with a one-bed need to be considered for a two-bed flat.
The majority of the three-bed houses are currently long term let (life-time tenancies).
Sharing in two-bed properties is allowed but may create problems with managing the contract in the case of a relationship breakdown.
Currently, under-occupancy by one bedroom is allowed.
38 per cent of council’s tenants are not on housing benefit so that 62% are in receipt of this to cover all or part of the rent.
The allocation policy will be reviewed by officers in the near future.
Options for fairer housing are to build more properties, redesignate, or amend size rules or sharing (which is supported but may create problems).
Redesignation has to be carefully planned. Housing much younger people with elderly may create problems. The age category 50 – 59 currently living in sheltered housing doesn’t create any problems.
The Localism Act will permit new forms of tenure and the scope for using these will be discussed with members.
Single people with child access require more flexibility.
Rural areas:
- Housing need has been identified through housing surveys but finances are not available to build.
- Sheltered housing is available in some parts of rural areas
- The Council is losing general needs stock because of the right to buy (the purchase discounts will become higher due to the Government national policy).
- Redesignation of stock is less possible than in the town.
- Building requires the involvement of the local parish council and the community to identify free or cheap land.
- Rural land is mainly inhabited by families.
- General view is that there is no development in rural areas.

During the discussion, the following questions were raised:

Current young couple applicants, how old would they have to get to get a property?

Could be never. It is impossible to say. Approximately 60 per cent of applicants don’t bid. Applicants’ aspirations and willingness to change them is stopping people from being housed.
Do we stop lifetime tenancies?

That is certainly an option which members will need to consider in the future and would only then apply to new tenants. It requires a change of council policy.

Will the ageing population mirror the decisions made for the future?

We will have to experiment over the next 20 years to find out what kind of accommodation is required. As we stand at the moment, we can redesignate properties without making any changes to them and then redesignate these back if needed. We need to understand how best to move with the times and a responsive and flexible approach would be needed to make this a success.

Some councils are changing UChoose bands from five to two or three. There are too many bands for applicants in Rugby.

Having only two or three bands might be something that will come out from the Housing Options Team end-to-end review.

IT WAS AGREED THAT –

(1) the Head of Housing and the Housing and Regeneration Manager be thanked for their input and presentation;
(2) the Head of Housing draft an action plan for the meeting on 22 March; and
(3) the Head of Housing monitor the effectiveness of policy changes and deal with any unforeseen consequences.

18. PLANNING FOR NEXT MEETING

The Task Group considered its programme of work and dates of future meeting. It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on 22 March 2012.

On 22 March, the Head of Housing will present the draft action plan which will be circulated to members in advance for their comments at the meeting.
Housing stock & housing need

Members’ Scrutiny Panel
7th February 2012
Introduction
How we got here

• Ambition – for Rugby’s housing stock to meet housing need fairly without unbalancing any neighbourhood.

• First meeting considered broad information on the council’s housing stock, the wider housing environment and the context within which the panel would be deliberating.
Proportion of council stock available to single people under 50 years of age

Annex 1
How we got here

The second meeting considered what fair looks like. The following definition of ‘what fair is’ was provisionally agreed:

(i) Giving people in housing need equal access to social housing regardless of age and location.
(ii) Meeting people’s housing aspirations including access to a variety of property types, sizes, and locations e.g. rural areas and high demand areas.
How we got here

The third meeting received and considered a whole host of facts and figures about council and housing association stock, lettings, Uchoose applicants and a case study area.
What next?

Tonight:

1. Whole housing stock profile maps
2. Reminder of key statistics
3. Conclusions and recommendations
What next?

1. Final task group meeting – March 2012
2. CUSP – 12\textsuperscript{th} April 2012
3. Cabinet – 16\textsuperscript{th} April 2012
4. Implementation
Key housing statistics
Key housing statistics

Profile of council stock by property type

% of stock

Bedsit 1 bed bungalow 1 bed flat 2 bed bungalow 2 bed flat 2 bed maisonette 3 bed flat 3 bed house 4+ bed house Sheltered flat Sheltered bungalow
Key statistics - property

- Bedsit/1bed: 36%
- 2 bed: 32%
- 3 bed: 31%
- 4+ bed: 1%

Stock profile by property size
Key statistics - property

"As built" stock profile

- General 4+ bed: 1%
- Bedsit/1 bed: 8%
- General 3 bed: 31%
- Sheltered: 37%
- General 2 bed: 23%
Key statistics - property

• BUT:

17% of sheltered housing is tenanted by someone younger than 60!
(This equates to 6% of the entire stock.)
Key statistics - property

Stock profile in "real life"

- General 4+ bed: 1%
- Bedsit/1 bed general: 8%
- General 3 bed: 31%
- Sheltered, tenant under 60: 6%
- General 2 bed: 23%
- Sheltered (all sizes), tenant aged 60+: 31%
Key statistics - people

Age distribution of borough population aged 16+

- Age band: 16-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, 80+
- Percentage distribution

Annex 1
Key statistics - people

Age distribution of borough population compared to council tenants

Annex 1
Key statistics - people

Age distribution of tenants, applicants and population compared

- Council tenants
- Borough population
- Applicants

Age band: 16-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, 80+
Key statistics - people

Various age distributions compared

- Council tenants
- Borough population
- Applicants
- Single apps

Age band
Key statistics - people

Live applicants by bedroom need and age

- 2 bed under 60: 30%
- 3 bed: 14%
- 1 bed under 50: 21%
- 1/2 bed 60+: 25%
- 1 bed 50-59: 8%
- 4 bed: 2%
Key statistics – people & property

Comparison of housing stock "as built" and housing list

- 1 bed under 60
- Sheltered
- 2 bed under 60
- 3 bed
- 4 bed

Housing register
Housing stock
Key statistics – people & property

Comparison of "real life" housing stock and housing list

- 1 bed under 50
- Sheltered tenant under 60, app 50-59
- Sheltered (all sizes), tenant aged 60+
- General 2 bed
- General 3 bed
- General 4+ bed

Legend:
- Housing register
- Housing stock

Annex 1
Key statistics – people & property

Housing register compared to lettings

- 0/1 bed general
- Sheltered
- 2 bed
- 3 bed
- 4 bed

Housing register
Lettings

%
Conclusions

1. All property types are in demand.
2. We can’t meet all needs, we can only try to make fair and best use of stock.
3. Single people aged 50-59 have had their options improved by “informal” redesignation.
4. Single people younger than 50 are the least well catered for client group.
Options

• Do nothing.
• Re-designate some less popular sheltered stock for younger single people.
• Build some new housing for single people.
• Amend size rules to allow single people to compete for some larger accommodation.
• Combinations of the above.
• Any others?
Issues to consider

• Policy changes take time in housing – re-designation can only happen with voids and even then depends upon priority.
• Welfare reform and under-occupation.
• Management issues with re-designation.
• Management issues with changes to size rules.