

MAJOR SCRUTINY REVIEW: REVIEW OF THE CAUSES OF TENANCY FAILURE AND HOW IT CAN BE PREVENTED

Cabinet Member	Councillor Philip Corthorne
Cabinet Portfolio	Social Services, Health and Housing
Officer Contact	Charles Francis, Administration Directorate
Papers with report	Social Services, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee Final Report.

HEADLINE INFORMATION

Purpose of report	To consider the Policy Overview Committee's report on the review of the causes of tenancy failure and how it can be prevented.
Contribution to our plans and strategies	To improve the sustainability of tenancies across all forms of tenure.
Financial Cost	No additional financial costs are contained in the report.
Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Social Services, Housing and Public Health
Ward(s) affected	All

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

- A) Welcomes the report from the Social Services, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee (as in Appendix 1) on the review into the causes of tenancy failure and how it can be prevented and;
- B) Endorses the recommendations of the Policy Overview Committee as set out below:-
 1. That Cabinet endorse the concept that support services that help sustain people in their own home must be tenure neutral and focus on practical help that will enable people to stay in their home.
 2. Endorse the risk based approach to tenancy sustainment currently being developed by officers with an emphasis on early intervention and problem solving.
 3. That in support of ongoing service transformation, consideration is given to ways of improving joint working across Council Teams, making these more flexible and proactive as well as promoting early intervention.

- 4. That, welcoming the service transformation taking place, officers consider reviewing the provision of support services in order to promote tenancy sustainment. Further, the Committee suggests that, having established the principle and mechanisms of tenancy sustainment, that the initial work proposed in this review be used as a basis for a possible review (in the next Municipal year) that focuses on discrete areas including ensuring sufficient support for those in most need, in particular those with mental health issues or other vulnerabilities.**
- 5. That the Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Housing requests that Council's front line staff receive refresher training to give basic advice and sign posting and consideration be given to the following:**
 - Undertaking a review of service directories and website information**
 - Developing information available through social networking**
 - Updating information leaflets available to residents on the provision of advice on benefits and relevant campaigns.**
- 6. The Council further highlight that discretionary housing payments are available but limited and keep the policy under review to ensure that there is sufficient provision in the budget.**
- 7. The Council build on existing work to encourage the take up of benefits and the use of outreach services to interact with harder to reach groups and make effective use of community facilities such as libraries.**
- 8. (That Cabinet) reaffirms the proposals made by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services in February 2009, where free independent financial and budget management lessons were made to schools and invites the Cabinet Member to take this opportunity to remind schools that such an offer is available.**
- 9. That Housing Services, Private Sector Landlords and Registered Social Landlords pursue joined up working on providing and /or sign posting budget information in their tenant's publicity materials so that where possible universal information, articles and media could be produced and used economically.**
- 10. The Council assist with the promotion and advertising of the services of the Hillingdon Credit Union and seek to increase its membership through the development of a marketing plan. That as part of this work, officers also consider the promotion and availability of accounts just for benefits and rent to ensure that these essential housing costs are paid first.**
- 11. Asks officers to develop a universal checklist of those agencies including Private Sector Landlords supporting tenancy sustainment and for this to be used to monitor success using outcomes based indicators and calculate the associated costs.**
- 12. Welcomes the work of the Children, Young People and Learning Policy Overview Committee to help supported children and Young Care Leavers and ensure they are assisted appropriately.**

Reasons for recommendations

The objective of the review was to examine how, why and when tenancies fail, what is currently done to prevent failure and investigate what more could be done. The review also aimed to ensure Hillingdon has effective systems in place for minimising tenancy failure.

Alternative options considered / risk management

The Cabinet could decide to reject some or all of the Committee's recommendations.

Supporting Information

The Social Services, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee held meetings on 10 September, 8 October, 6 November and 3 December 2013 when background information and evidence was received to help the Committee in forming their findings.

The Terms of Reference of the review were as follows:

- To establish which housing tenancies fail across housing sectors and why;
- To understand the impact and likely future impact of welfare reform on tenancy sustainment;
- To establish what current action is taken to prevent tenancy failure;
- To establish what more could be done to sustain tenancies;
- To make recommendations to Cabinet/the Cabinet Member to address any issues arising from the above investigations *OR to highlight those areas requiring further investigation.*

The Committee heard from:

- John Higgins, Service Manager, Mental Health
- Nick Ellender, Safeguarding Team, Service Manager
- Tony Zaman, Director of Adult Social Care Services
- Amanada Jackson, Service Manager Disability Services
- Kevin Jones, Children's Services
- Ed Shaylor, Anti-Social Behaviour Team, Service Manager
- Nigel Dicker, Deputy Director, Residents Services
- Neil Stubbings, Head of Housing
- Debby Weller, Residents Services (Transformation), Housing Strategy Manager
- Huw Thomas, Housing Manager (Income)
- Rod Smith, Head of Estates Management
- Sinead Mooney, Housing Manager (Independent Living)
- Sunita Gudhil, Area Benefits Manager
- Charrison Davies, Estate Agent – David Miller
- Phillip Laurence, Estate Agent – written submission
- Hillingdon Mind - Christopher Geake & written submission
- Hillingdon Credit Union - Steve Allen, President
- Age UK Hillingdon – written submission

Key findings, which were identified in the review included the following factors which will help to reduce the risk of tenancy failure and improve outcomes for residents:

- The adoption of an effectively targeted risk-based approach,
- The implementation of cost-effective early intervention strategies,

- The urgent need for further work to embed interdepartmental working across Council teams which will improve outcomes by placing tenants and residents at the heart of service delivery,
- Work with other agencies in the lettings market to develop a consistent approach with a coherent message for tenants and residents about rights and responsibilities.

Officer Comments on the Implementation of the Recommendations

The broad scope of this review led to wide ranging recommendations covering a number of service areas. In considering their implementation, the following comments are provided by officers for Cabinet to consider:

- a. **Recommendation 1:** As noted within the recommendation itself, support services need to be tenure neutral but also place a greater emphasis on the Private Sector. This will be taken forward through various strategies including the Housing Strategy, Older People's and Homelessness Strategy.
- b. **Recommendations 2:** The risk based approach to tenancy sustainment is currently being developed by officers with an emphasis on early intervention and problem solving. This is being expanded across all tenures.
- c. **Recommendation 3:** The transformation of services is considering ways of improving joint working across Council Teams for example early intervention principles and joint working, through the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) are now being implemented and tested.
- d. **Recommendation 4:** Tenancy sustainment will be added to the Committee's work programme to be considered as a possible Committee review in the next municipal year
- e. **Recommendation 5:** Officers have confirmed that refresher training will be built into action plans for the future.
- f. **Recommendation 6:** Regular reviews are undertaken in relation to discretionary housing payments with the outcomes being presented to Cabinet at regular intervals.
- g. **Recommendation 7:** Officers have confirmed that methods of encouraging the use of outreach services and the take up of benefits will be built into the Team Plans for 2014/15.
- h. **Recommendation 8:** The Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services has confirmed that the Interim Head of Education Policy and Standards will be asked to remind schools that independent financial and budget management lessons are available.
- i. **Recommendation 9:** The pursuance of joined up working opportunities will be taken forward at various fora / meetings including the relevant internal and external bodies.
- j. **Recommendation 10:** This recommendation requires appropriately, further work with the Hillingdon Credit Union and which will be taken forward by Housing Officers and the Manager of the Hillingdon Credit Union.
- k. **Recommendation 11:** Officers confirm that a universal check list will be developed with particular emphasis on identifying measurable outcomes and efficiency indicators.
- l. **Recommendation 12:** The Children, Young People and Learning Policy Overview Committee have spent considerable time over the last year focusing on Looked After Children, and the Social Services, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee will assist in reviewing the housing support aspect of this at its meeting in January 2014.

Financial Implications

Approval of the recommendations contained in the report will not give rise to any immediate financial implication.

All follow on actions which may require revisions of resource allocation will be achieved via the Council-wide MTFF process.

EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES

What will be the effect of the recommendations?

The recommendations, if agreed, will improve tenancy sustainment in the Borough and in particular help reduce the social and financial costs associated with tenancy failure.

Consultation Carried Out or Required

The Committee heard evidence from the witnesses listed in the report.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance has reviewed this report and concurs with the financial implications set out above, noting that there are no direct financial implications from the recommendation that Cabinet endorse the outcome of the Policy Overview Committee review. Where implementation of new initiatives or policy changes will result in financial implications, these will be addressed in full as part of future reports to Members.

Figures quoted within the attached Policy Overview Committee report reflect the position as at August 2013 on publication of that report.

Legal

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL