

Minutes

SOCIAL SERVICES, HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

26 March 2015

Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Wayne Bridges Teji Barnes Peter Curling Peter Davis Beulah East Ian Edwards Becky Haggar John Oswell Shehryar Wallana</p> <p>Mary O'Connor</p> <p>Officers Present: Rod Smith, Service Manager - Tenancy Services John Higgins, Head of Safeguarding Sharon Daye, Consultant in Public Health Charles Francis, Democratic Services</p>	
	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO REPORT THE PRESENCE OF ANY SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Dhot. Cllr Curling acted as substitute.</p>	
	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>	
	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 FEBRUARY 2014 (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>Were agreed as an accurate record subject to the following amendments. That the attendance be changed to read: Cllr Lakmana and Cllr Khatra were not present but Cllr Dhot and Cllr Oswell were.</p>	
	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED IN PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED PART II WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>All the items were considered in Part 1.</p>	

REVIEW OF THE CAUSES OF TENANCY FAILURE AND HOW IT CAN BE PREVENTED - UPDATE REPORT

The Service Manager - Tenancy Services introduced the report which provided an update on the progress made by Officers since the last report which was received in October 2014.

Officers explained that new ways of working had created a specialist tenancy sustainment function over and above that delivered as an integral part of the tenancy management function. The sustainment team was now central to supporting the objectives of a number of housing teams across the 'housing specialist' and 'tenancy management' services.

The Committee learnt that underpinning the entire 'end to end' process was the adoption of a risk-based approach to the management of all tenancy types. Central to this approach was:

- The initial and ongoing assessment of risk.
- A more tailored approach to the management of the tenancy which is person centred.
- The adoption of a planned [risk-based] approach to the management of the tenancy.
- The use of annual 'tenancy checks' alongside 'new tenant visits' and 'probationary tenancy visits' as a minimum.
- Drawing in more specialist resources where required.
- Recording planned and unplanned 'tenancy events' in a single 'living plan' [the Tenancy Management Plan] during the life-time of the tenancy which is held on Civica.

Officers confirmed that a risk based approach to the management of successful tenancies ensured the Council intervened at an early stage to help 'at-risk tenants' retain a secure home while meeting the responsibilities of their tenancy agreement. This approach also took account of people moving in and out of vulnerability during the lifetime of their tenancy and in response to certain 'trigger events' e.g. bereavement, relationship breakdown, ill-health and loss of employment. Therefore, contact with the tenant and the ongoing assessment and management of risk were central to the mitigation of tenancy failure.

Officers explained that all new tenants would receive a 'new tenant visit' within 4 weeks of tenancy commencement. This important meeting would fulfil a number of functions including, the establishment of the landlord and tenant relationship moving forward and it would also be the first occasion for the Housing Officer to 'assess' the tenant's needs and requirements for any support to effectively sustain the tenancy.

In addition to assessing the tenant and identifying any unmet needs, the Committee learnt that the completion a new tenant visit checklist was an opportunity to share a number of key messages with the

tenant. Working through the new tenant visit form and using the checklist approach, it was possible for the Housing Officer to identify 'risks' and support 'gaps' which needed to be picked up as an integral part of developing the 'tenancy management plan'.

As part of the new tenant visit process, all new tenants would be assessed as either 'low', 'medium' or 'high' risk of tenancy failure. This risk rating tool could then be used to help formulate the content of the plan and recognise the impact of a range of 'trigger incidents'.

The Committee heard that a more person centred approach to the management of a tenancy required the Housing Officer to consider a number of factors at the start of the tenancy. These factors were considered critical to enable the effective assessment and support of vulnerable households. During the course of the tenancy it would be necessary to re-assess the tenant in recognition that people moved in and out of vulnerability and or are disproportionately affected by life events which could put their tenancy at risk.

The Committee heard that the following core areas were seen as critical to the adoption of a risk-based approach to the management of tenancies:

- Managing the tenancy and accommodation.
- Self-care and living skills.
- Managing money and personal administration.
- Social networks and relationships.
- Drug and alcohol misuse.
- Physical health.
- Emotional and mental health.
- Meaningful use of time.
- Offending.
- Motivation and taking responsibility.

To improve performance, Officers explained that it was essential to ensure appropriate support was in place to ensure that vulnerable residents were able to comply with their tenancy obligations. To monitor progress, a range of performance indicators had been developed to demonstrate the value of the service and positively influence behaviours within the staff group.

- **%Tenancy management plans completed within 6 weeks of tenancy commencement** [this is about 'front loading' work at the start of the tenancy which culminates in the production and completion of a tailored approach to managing the tenancy]
- **Number of Tenancies ending within the first 12 months** - [Testing the Council's work on 'sustainment' and ensuring that tenants progress through their Probationary period]
- **Numbers of tenancies extended / reasons** - [Ensuring Officers make effective use of the probationary tenancy framework to manage risk and address breaches]
- **Number of Tenancy management interventions completed / outcomes** - [Focus on the work undertaken to resolve breaches and ensure tenancies are 'successful']

- **Numbers and outcomes from annual 'tenancy checks'** - [Capturing the value of seeing people in their own homes and the extent and nature of outcomes / follow up actions]
- **Outcomes of tenancy reviews** - [To show how the Council's policy on introducing a fixed tenancy policy is working i.e. numbers 'moving on']
- **Number of cases / time U&O cases are running where the review outcome is that the tenant cannot stay in their existing property** - [Measure of how slick / swift the process is to match people to suitable alternative property so that their existing property can be relet in line with the allocations policy]

Summarising the performance as at February 2015, the Committee noted that:

- 258 Tenancy management plans had been completed - all within 6 weeks of tenancy commencement.
- 3 Tenancies had ended in the first 12 months (Given that the number of re-lets exceeds 400 each year, a total of 3 tenancies ending within the first 12 months was extremely positive).
- 13 Probationary Tenancies had been extended.
- There had been 334 'tenancy management interventions'.
- 631 'Tenancy checks' completed.

The report summarised the role of Housing Support Officers and the outcomes of the referral process. Officers concluded by highlighting what the next steps would be taken to enhance tenancy sustainment.

The Committee noted that the transformation process in respect of tenancy management and tenancy sustainment was still ongoing. Managers were looking to maximise the value of delivering housing related support on a tenure neutral basis to minimise the extent of tenancy failure. Officers explained that this would incorporate the need to ensure effective approaches to joint working and problem solving in addition to shared use of information.

Key areas of further work included:

- Further Civica development work, using the work flow processes already developed, to extract and automate the production of management information and performance reports from Civica.
- From February 2015 Support Workers had been working closely with colleagues in the Lettings Service to ensure that they attended new tenant 'sign-ups'.
- Developing the role of Housing Officers with regards to risk assessment and risk management in the context of delivering tenancy management services across a range of tenancy types
- Addressing the implications of the Care Act.
- Welfare Reform and the introduction of Universal Credit.

The Committee welcomed the significant progress which had been made since October 2014.

Commenting on the introduction of Universal Credit, the Committee noted there might be issues with rent arrears going forward. In

response, Officers confirmed that the real challenge would be managing the spike in the first 3 months and to reduce this as much as possible.

Noting the timing of tenancy visits, Members asked about the rationale for this. Officers reported that undertaking this visit too early i.e. before 4 weeks had elapsed might not give the tenant sufficient time to 'settle in' whilst completing the visit after 4 weeks might be 'too late' in terms of maximising the potential from 'early intervention' if the tenant had underlying unmet needs which would impact upon their ability to manage their tenancy and live independently.

Officers were asked whether adequate provision was in place to assist vulnerable tenants, especially those with mental health issues. The Committee were assured to learn that the added flexibility of the new ways of working meant links were in place between services. In addition, it was noted that the tailored approach and tenancy management plans meant that the most vulnerable could be visited regularly at the start of their tenancy.

In response to a question related to the increased use of the Private Rented Sector (PRS), Officers confirmed that the Council was running a PRS leaving scheme to reduce the number of void properties as well as increasing the amount of rental income it could generate.

As a general closing remark, Officers commented that effective tenancy sustainment focused on the right skill sets and getting the right people in place to intervene at an appropriate point to assist tenants.

Resolved -

- 1. That the report be noted**

50. **MAJOR REVIEWS IN 2014/15 - DRAFT FINAL REPORT**

Officers introduced the draft final report and explained this summarised the findings of the witness session which had been held on 24 February 2015.

The report and recommendations were agreed subject the following amendments:

1. That reference be made to the lack of an over arching dental strategy in paragraph 23 of the report.
2. That the NICE recommendations, be included as an appendix to the report to Cabinet.

Resolved -

- 1. That subject to the amendments listed above, the report and recommendations be agreed.**
- 2. That the report be circulated to the Chairman and Labour Lead for agreement outside the meeting.**
- 3. That the report be considered at April / May 2015 Cabinet.**

Democratic Services

	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>)</p> <p>The Committee considered the latest version of the Forward Plan.</p> <p>Resolved –</p> <p>1. That the report be noted.</p>	<p>Action by</p>
	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 10</i>)</p> <p>Reference was made to the work programme and timetable of meetings.</p> <p>Resolved</p> <p>1. The Committee noted the Work Programme 2013/14.</p>	<p>Action by</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 7:56 pm.</p>	

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Charles Francis on 01895 556454 . Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.