

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### **Report to Housing Policy Development and Review Panel**

**Date**                    **21 September 2017**

**Report of:**            **Director of Operations**

**Subject:**              **TENANCY MANAGEMENT**

#### **SUMMARY**

This report provides Panel members with information in regard to housing management services covered by the Tenancy Services team. The report includes information about the Council's housing stock, staffing structures and an overview of housing service functions with particular attention to the management of Empty Council properties, Sheltered Housing service, Exchanges, Modernisation work and Right to Buy.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Panel notes the information contained within the report.

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. The Tenancy Services team is responsible for the day to day management of council housing tenancies. Housing service functions provided by the Tenancy Services team include the following:
  - Housing Rent Collection;
  - Tenancy Management;
  - Estate Management;
  - Sheltered Housing;
  - Tenant Involvement;
  - Leasehold Management;
  - Right to Buy;
  - Empty Property Management;
  - Exchanges; and
  - Kitchen/Bathroom modernisations
2. This report provides panel members with some general information about the Council's Housing Stock and the staffing structure for Tenancy Services but also focuses on five service function areas: Sheltered Housing, Empty Property Management, Right to Buy, Exchanges and Kitchen/Bathroom modernisations. A further report on the remaining service function areas will be presented to the panel in March 2018.

## **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - HOUSING STOCK**

3. As at June 2017 there are 2394 properties. This figure is broken down into 1703 general needs properties and 691 sheltered properties. Properties sold under shared ownership and on a leasehold basis through Right to Buy are not included in these totals.
4. A breakdown of the general needs properties by size, type and area is illustrated in the table marked appendix A to this report, and a breakdown of the sheltered properties by size, type and area is illustrated in appendix B.
5. The stock figure is affected by right to buy sales, re-purchases, new build, demolitions and other disposals such as sale on the open market or change of use.
6. The Council also owns 582 garages which are let to tenants and private residents.

## **RIGHT TO BUY**

7. Most tenants who hold a secure tenancy for at least 3 years are eligible to purchase their home through the Right to Buy (RTB) scheme. This however does not apply to tenants who do not have a secure tenancy and those tenants who live in accommodation which is designated for the elderly and accommodation which is designated for the disabled.
8. Under the RTB scheme tenants can claim up to 70% discount off the purchase price subject to a maximum discount amount of £78,600.
9. Over the past 5 years a total of 51 homes have been purchased through RTB; 28 three bed houses; 17 two bed properties and 6 one bed properties. In the same period the Council purchased 12 properties using RTB receipts and built 99 new homes.

## **STAFFING STRUCTURES**

10. There are two separate staffing structures in place for Tenancy Services, one covering Tenancy Management, as illustrated in appendix C of this report and the other covering Sheltered Housing illustrated in appendix D.
11. Officers in the Tenancy Management team are all based at the Council's Civic Offices on Floor 5, whereas the Sheltered Housing team is based at sheltered schemes throughout the borough.

## **SHELTERED HOUSING SERVICE**

12. The sheltered housing officer team provides a sheltered housing service to tenants living in sheltered accommodation but also provides a service to a small number of elderly tenants living in general needs accommodation and elderly residents in the private sector.
13. The service for elderly and vulnerable tenants living in the council's sheltered accommodation is based on a CORE and CLUSTER model.
14. The service provided to 227 tenants living in the Council's CORE sheltered schemes is the presence of an onsite Sheltered Housing Officer during office hours Monday – Friday. Emergency assistance is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week throughout the year.

The CORE sheltered schemes are at the following sites:

- Assheton Court, Castle Street, Portchester
- Barnfield Court, Butser Walk, Fareham South West
- Collingwood Court, Stow Estate, Fareham North West
- Crofton Court, Bells Lane, Stubbington
- Downing Court, Churchill Close, Titchfield Common
- Sylvan Court, Jerram Place, Sarisbury

15. The service provided to 464 tenants living in the Council's CLUSTER sheltered schemes is dependent on the support needs of the individual tenant. The service options include a weekly visit from a mobile Sheltered Housing Officer; an alarm and monitoring service with emergency response by a member of the sheltered housing officer team or an alarm and monitoring service only. All three service options include an alarm linked to a central control centre which is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week throughout the year.
16. In addition to tenants living in sheltered housing accommodation, the Sheltered Housing Officer team also provides a service to approximately 25 elderly tenants living in general purpose accommodation and over 200 elderly residents living in their privately owned accommodation in the Borough.
17. The cost of the sheltered housing service is recovered in full from those tenants who receive the service. The cost of the service is made up of two charges; a sheltered housing management charge (eligible for housing benefit) which covers the cost of management and administration associated with the service and the other, a sheltered housing support charge (not eligible for housing benefit) which covers the cost of support provided to tenants by a Sheltered Housing Officer.

## MANAGEMENT OF EMPTY POPERTIES

18. The Council generally re-lets between 150 and 200 empty council homes each year. In 2016-17 a total of 186 homes were re-let. A breakdown of lettings by property size, type and designation are shown in the following tables

### General Needs Properties

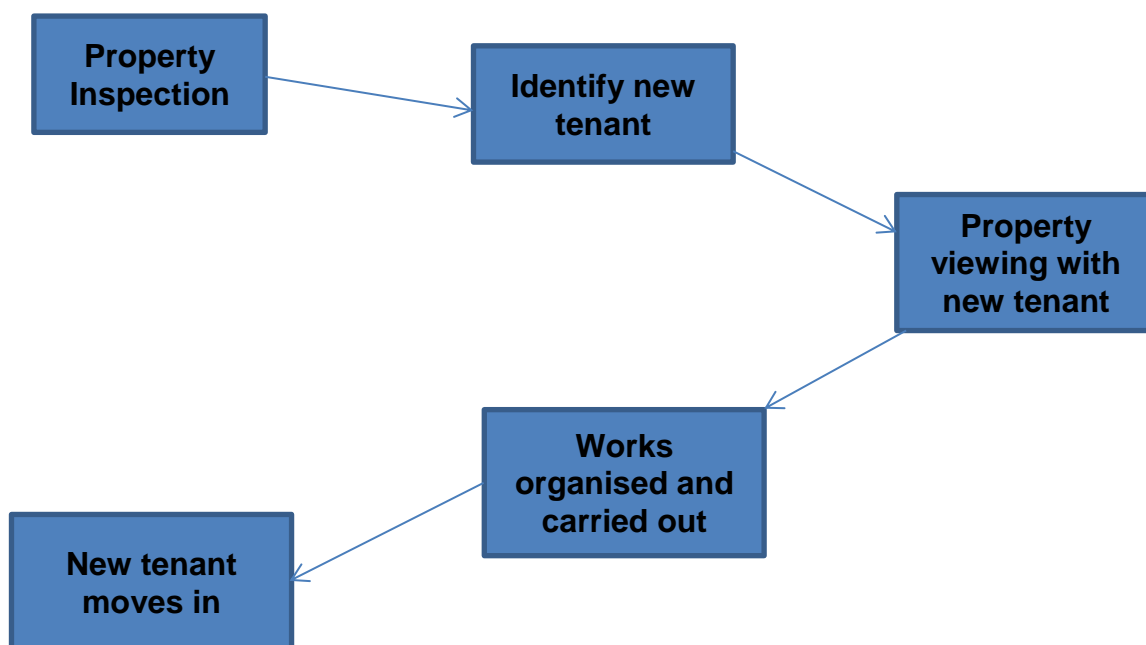
Property size and type	Number of Lettings
Bedsit/Studio Flats	11
1 Bedroom Flats/Maisonettes	24
1 Bed Bungalow/House	7
2 Bed Flats/Maisonettes	44
2 Bed Bungalow/House	4
3 Bed Flat	1
3 Bed House	24
4 Bed House	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>116</b>

### Sheltered Properties

Property size and type	Number of Lettings
Bedsit/Studio Flats	6
1 Bedroom Flats/Maisonettes	53
1 Bed Bungalow	7
2 Bed Flats	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>

19. The way in which empty homes are managed has changed in recent years with more emphasis placed on matching the right person to the vacant property and carrying out works to empty homes that have been identified and agreed with the new tenant, rather than reinstating the property to a prescribed standard.

20. The process of managing empty properties is summarised in the flowchart below:



21. In terms of performance measures, although we monitor the void period (Date when keys are returned by the outgoing tenant to the date when the new tenancy begins), the main focus is ensuring the right person is allocated the right property. Factors which help determine this are that:

- The property attributes meet the needs of the household – Right size, right area, property accessible and rent is affordable.

22. It is believed that by ensuring a good match of person to property, the new tenant will be happy in their new home, look after the property, pay their rent on time and show consideration to their neighbours. Monitoring of cases show that the majority of new tenants were not falling behind with their rent or reporting repairs after moving in. This contributes toward more sustainable tenancies in the longer term and the freeing up of officer time in managing tenancies.

## **EXCHANGES**

23. Tenants who hold a secure tenancy have a right to exchange (swap) their home. This is a mutual agreement with two or more parties who must have the written consent from their landlord.

24. Exchanges are a preferred housing option for many social housing tenants who may be adequately housed but want to move to a different area or are looking for a move to larger or smaller accommodation but don't want to wait years on any housing list.

25. The Council has signed up to a national exchange scheme called HomeSwapper and all secure tenants are eligible to apply through the scheme to exchange with another social housing tenant almost anywhere in the Country. On applying to HomeSwapper tenants are asked to provide information about their present property and say what property they are looking for.

26. At the time of writing, 178 council tenants are registered on Homeswapper. Of these, 22 are under-occupying their home and 69 are overcrowded.

27. The HomeSwapper scheme will match applicants' needs and notify them of potential exchange opportunities. When tenants believe they have identified a property they are interested in they contact the Council to obtain our written consent. The Council has 42 days in which to consider and respond. However in reality, if there are no issues arising, most exchanges are processed within 4 weeks.

28. On receipt of exchange application and confirming eligibility, housing officers arrange an inspection of the property together with a property surveyor and both parties to the exchange. The purpose of the visit is to identify and agree work that will be carried out by the Council and any work that the outgoing tenant needs to carry out prior to the exchange. In some cases the ingoing tenant may accept responsibility for the future maintenance and upkeep of any non- standard fixtures and fittings.

29. In the event that other parties to the exchange are social housing tenants of another local authority or housing association there will be an exchange of tenant references before any consent is given to the parties.

30. In 2016/17 a total of 21 exchanges took place; a third of these with other exchange parties living outside the Borough.

## **KITCHEN AND BATHROOM MODERNISATIONS**

31. Historically, the former Building Services team procured kitchen and bathroom replacements in occupied properties on a planned programme basis. Following the Systems Thinking intervention, the delivery of such works transferred to the Tenancy Services team.
32. In the event of a repair issue being reported to the Responsive Repairs team by the tenant, an operative will visit and assess whether it is necessary and proportionate to replace the kitchen or bathroom. If so, this is then referred to the Tenancy Services team to organise the works.
33. For the period August 2016 to May 2017 a total of 29 kitchens and 44 bathrooms were modernised in tenanted homes.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

34. There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report.

## **CONCLUSION**

35. This report has provided panel members with some general information about the council housing service and in particular some of the service areas provided by the Tenancy Services team.

**Appendices:**        [Appendix A](#) - Stock breakdown for General Needs properties  
                             [Appendix B](#) - Stock breakdown for Sheltered properties  
                             [Appendix C](#) - Staffing structure for Tenancy Management  
                             [Appendix D](#) - Staffing structure for Sheltered Housing

**Background Papers:**    None

**Reference Papers:**        None

**Enquiries:**

For further information on this report please contact Jon Shore. (Ext 4375)