

CABINET – 11TH JANUARY 2024

Report of the Scrutiny Commission

DECLASSIFICATION OF PROPERTIES DESIGNATED FOR ALLOCATION TO PEOPLE AGES OVER 45 YEARS

Purpose of Report

To consider the comments and recommendations of the Scrutiny Commission in relation to the Declassification of Properties Designed for Allocation to People Aged Over 45 Years report.

Recommendation of the Scrutiny Commission

That the Cabinet be informed that the Commission welcomes and supports the recommendations set out in the report of the Director of Housing and Wellbeing.

Reason

The Commission, having carefully considered and asked questions on the report felt the Cabinet should approve the recommendations set out.

Meeting Discussion

- i. Without actioning the recommendations, the Council could be challenged by individuals on the Housing Register who did not qualify for a property assigned to those aged 45+. The Council's Equalities Officer had been consulted and it was confirmed that there was a requirement for proportionate justification for continuation of a 45+ category in order for the Council to avoid risk of challenge. There did not appear to be a proportionate justification given that the properties in question did not have features which made them particularly suitable for people aged 45+.
- ii. The Council was in an anomalous position, with significantly more properties with age restrictions of 45+ than other local authorities.
- iii. There was no proposed change to the Council's stock of properties assigned for residents aged 60+, which were designed for residents of that age range.
- iv. There was a void property backlog, which the Council was working to resolve. The Scrutiny Commission had received updates on this issue and were due to receive a further update on this in February 2024. Voids from each classification were handled in the same way.
- v. There were mechanisms built into the housing allocations policies and procedures to support suitable allocations. Applicants who were unsuitable to be a tenant, for example where they had been responsible for anti-social behaviour or were unable to adhere to the terms of a tenancy agreement, would

not be accepted onto the housing register or considered for an offer of accommodation until they had demonstrated a significant change in their behaviour. Suitability assessments were completed for all allocations by the housing needs team, in consultation with the landlord services team, taking into account the suitability of the accommodation for the applicant and the suitability of the applicant for the accommodation. These processes would help to minimise the risk of a clash in lifestyles in areas where properties were to be declassified.

- vi. The declassification process would take effect in Summer 2024, following an appropriate communications process and the recruitment of an additional ASB Officer and an additional Tenancy and Estate Management Officer to support the changes. The declassification would be carefully managed and would take effect gradually in a phased approach, and as properties became vacant.
- vii. It was recognised that some residents may be concerned about the declassification of properties and it was suggested that the declassification of properties be discussed at the Charnwood Housing Resident's Forum. It was intended that calls to the Council in relation to the declassification of properties be filtered into a dedicated queue, to be addressed by officers. The Council had a well-resourced Tenancy Support team which would help to minimise issues.
- viii. Members felt that the report was very clear and easy to understand.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

Scrutiny Commission Procedure Rule 11.12 sets out the procedure by which a report of a Scrutiny Committee should be considered by Cabinet.

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions and Scrutiny

The information on this in the Cabinet report is not affected by the recommendation of the Scrutiny Commission.

Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report.

Financial Implications

There are no further financial implications associated with the recommendation of the Scrutiny Commission.

Risk Management

There are no specific risks associated with the recommendations of the Scrutiny Commission.

Key Decision: Yes

Background Paper:

Scrutiny Commission Minute 88 2023/24, 8th January
2024

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