

Housing Models and Approaches – Feedback from other Organisations 12/19

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To inform how Kirklees approach the future management of its Council Housing stock.
- 1.2. The questionnaire was created as an alternative to attendance at a formal ad-hoc scrutiny meeting.
- 1.3. The intention is to provide further information to add to that provided by those organisations who are attending scrutiny in person.

2. Approach

- 2.1 A total of 7 organisations who ad-hoc scrutiny intended to invite to provide evidence.
- 2.2 These were a combination of Registered Providers (RP's), Almo's and In-house providers.
- 2.3 The information contained below is taken directly from feedback / is verbatim.

3. Responses

The organisations

- 3.1 Registered providers, all of which were formed via a stock transfer, provided 3 of the responses and another came from an Almo.
- 3.2 Since the original contract, 2 respondents have merged with other organisations.
- 3.3 Organisations whose current arrangements have been in place for more than 10 years totalled 3, with the other one existing between 3 and 5 years.
- 3.4 None of the 3 long established organisations have considered changing their arrangements in the last 3 years.
- 3.5 All 4 had no plans to review their arrangements.

Reason for change

- 3.6 The one organisation who has moved from an Almo to RP model and they said they would make the same change now as they believe it 'enables accelerated investment in both existing and new homes utilising the value of the stock. The Local Authority is in a strong position through the transfer agreement to negotiate for the transferring RP to deliver priorities that it and tenants consider appropriate for the area.'
- 3.7 They saw ensuring safe and decent homes as being their high priority - 'the main driver was to address decency'.
- 3.8 Medium priority was given to improved joint working across services; improved service quality; and expanding supply or ownership.

Approach to change

3.9 The organisation who had experienced change used an independent options appraisal and had a Customer Senate. This 'led on customer voice and ensured it was central in the offer to tenants'.

Current arrangements

3.10 Respondents were asked how their current arrangements allowed them to prioritise vulnerable citizens e.g. care leavers and people with mental health problems. Views were :-

- a. 'We have a Tenant First service that assist tenants to sustain tenancies with specialisms in mental health and substance abuse issues, care leavers would also be picked up as part of this service.'
- b. 'Through the stock transfer process we agreed a nominations agreement with the LA that stated a minimum of 75% of all allocations should be sourced from the LA Choice Based Lettings System. The allocation policy for the CBL system is an LA document and so prioritise and awards points for those groups deemed most in need. In reality we allocate over 90% of homes through the CBL system'.
- c. 'By having a vulnerabilities register this allows specific services to be tailored to the needs of individuals and in times where a response is required promptly.'
- d. 'We have a programme of supported housing which delivers care according to need. We tend to provide the property and landlord service and work with specialist providers for the care element.'

3.11 They were also asked 'How do your current arrangements allow you to influence the design elements of the environment and stock - new and retro-fit?' Views were :-

- a. 'We have an acquisitions programme and work with the Council on new build council housing. In terms of retro fit we have an adaptations budget and zero carbon programme such as solar panels and heating replacements as part of the investment plans.'
- b. 'As a stock transfer we have responsibilities and obligations that were identified through the transfer process, these include investment in decent homes, disabled adaptations etc '.
- c. 'All environmental improvements involve consultation with all affected residents so that their views can be considered as part of the design stages of any scheme. In terms of new stock, these are built, or acquired, to current legislation to ensure they meet the needs not just for now but for the future. Energy efficiency is always considered and a number of initiatives have taken place to improve this in existing stock, which is supported by discussing with residents who their energy suppliers are and helping them switch to a more cost effective supplier for them.'
- d. 'We have control over the design of the environment and stock, both new and retro fit. With the environment and new stock we work closely with our partner Local Authority.'

Review

- 3.12 The organisation responding to this area of the questionnaire believed it has achieved all of the benefits it set out to achieve.
- 3.13 In terms of reviewing / changing the operating model, the key reflection was that 'the transfer from Almo to RP went smoothly. The part transition to Almo had already introduced a level of independence and so it made the final steps to an RP easier i.e. employees had already TUPE'd across to the ALMO.'