

OLVERHAMPTON FEDERATION OF TENANTS' ASSOCIATIONS C.I.C

Minutes of the General Meeting 7pm Monday 21st October 2019 at Coven Lodge.

Attendance: as per list.

1. Apologies:

Dave Cocker, Margaret Perry.

2. Declarations of interest:

None.

3. Minutes of the meeting on 16th September 2019:

Agreed subject to Janet Taylor's apologies included.

4. Matters arising: None.

5. Allocations Policy – Jenny Lewington and Henry Gregory WCC.

Jenny said that the policy was last reviewed in 2007 and since then there have been a few tweaks. The consultation on the proposed draft policy ends this week, responses can also be made on line and it will go to cabinet for approval next February. A steering group of officers from WCC, WHs and the Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) has developed the draft. She said they have a waiting list of over 10,000.

Henry said the objectives have been revised but it is about ensuring people in the greatest housing need have the greatest opportunity to access suitable housing. He said there is a proposed new emergency plus band to ensure those with the highest need are given the most priority. Ann raised overcrowding and Jenny said the policy will elevate those with the most overcrowding. Henry said a new banding priority is recommended so that those that require larger accommodation will receive increased priority such as foster carers and those approved to adopt. There will be also be increased priority for those leaving care on the housing list and Wolverhampton care leavers up until 25 years of age who have lived out of City will not be subject to W'ton's residential requirements.

Bob raised concerns as to the issue and the priority of care leavers who have lived in W'ton and established ties in the area but who are under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority.

Henry said there are approximately 5,000 applicants who are on the list but have no housing need and are in band 4. He said it is proposed to reassess these and if there is no need to take them off the register. He said they will still be entitled to advice and support in accessing other tenures.

It is proposed to remove the local connection allowance on a City wide scale but a version to be retained for new build, so half of the properties on a new build site will retain the local connection. There was a discussion about this and Bob raised concerns as to sustainability of communities. Jenny said it is fairer to go on housing need than local connection. She said they have done equality impact assessments. She said if a TMO has a local lettings policy agreed with WCC this will be retained. Ann raised concern as to children in flats. Paul Ryder asked why more can't be done to utilise empty properties. Jenny said they do have a strategy in place but it is difficult as many are not owned by the Council.

Henry said they wish to increase the debt level an applicant can be in before having their priority demoted to a level of £400. Great concern was raised about this because of individual circumstances and Universal Credit. Bob said this needs to be more sophisticated to ensure those in need are not disadvantaged

It is proposed that the allocation of ground floor flats should be limited to those with a mobility requirement.

Applicants will be prevented from bidding on properties in particular areas or of particular types where there is a threat to the safety of themselves or others. There was a discussion about hoarders. Janet said officers do not address the issues as to why people hoard, this can be a mental health problem. Bob said there is a danger that people's human rights will be disregarded. Jenny said a panel of professionals will decide on individual cases to exclude from the list. Bob asked about an appeal system on those decisions. Marie asked how issues are picked up Jenny said that this will happen when officers go through the application.

Henry said they will be undertaking a feasibility study of establishing an Accessible Housing register to improve access to adapted properties for those who require them. They also need to improve information about the housing stock.

Joy asked about property size other than the number of bedrooms. Jenny said they need to do more work on this particularly around parlour house but that this would not be included in this review.

6. Finance:

Ann referred members to the ½ yearly finance report in the packs, this was agreed.

7. Correspondence:

None.

8. AOB:

Marie spoke about a training course she had attended that was delivered by the National Energy Action Group about tackling the cold. Amongst other advice given out she said that Alvina Ali from WHs will visit to check heating and to give basic advice on how to keep warm if requested. Alvina can be contacted on 07791 445 495.

Date/time next meeting: Monday 18th November 2019, 7pm at Coven Lodge.