

APPENDIX ONE:

Minutes from Housing O & S meeting on 17th June 2015

(Extract)

8. Right to Move

The Strategic Lead Housing introduced the report which detailed a new statutory rule called the 'Right to Move' which came into force on the 20 April 2015. In introducing the report it was proposed that the annual quota of properties to be allocated under the new scheme be set at 1% of all council housing allocations for the preceding year, which equated to six properties.

The Committee were advised that Member's recommendations would be referred to Cabinet for determination and approval.

The Strategic Lead Housing set out the strict criteria that needed to be met in order to qualify for the scheme and confirmed that the 1% quota equated to six properties, based on the total number of relets in 2014-15 that would be available for re-letting under the new provisions.

The Housing Tenant representative asked for clarification as to whether someone outside the Borough or even Essex could move into Thurrock if they qualified. In response officers explained that someone from outside of the Borough could qualify if they met the strict criteria set out in scheme, and that they would be awarded Band 3 priority but would be required to follow the established bidding process and meet the behavioural and financial requirements set in the Allocations Policy.

Councillor Ojetola questioned why the annual quota proposed was set at 1%, to which it was explained that this was government's recommendation but that the local authority could increase or decrease the figure. However it was noted that if the quota was determined at less than 1% Thurrock would be required to issue a public statement to state the reasons why the quota was lower than the governments recommended standard.

Councillor MacPherson asked if the six properties allocated under the scheme would remain empty until required, following which it was clarified that properties would not be held empty and it was a case that once the quota was reached further lettings under the Right to Move regulation would cease for that year.

Council Ojetola felt that the set criteria were not clear enough and that the implications needed to be more defined.

Members were concerned that the introduction of the new quota could unfairly disadvantage Thurrock residents in favour of housing people from outside of the Borough and that it would in effect reduce the number of council housing stock available for Thurrock residents.

Officers explained that they believed it would be unlikely that there would be significant demand under the regulation in Thurrock and proposed that the Committee review the figures again at the end of the year, when if there had been any uptake the quota could be reconsidered if appropriate.

In response to the concerns raised by Members, the Director of Housing proposed that officers work to foster mutual exchanges with any 'Right to Move' applicant so as to reduce the impact on Thurrock Council housing stock.

Members indicated their agreement with the proposal and a brief discussion took place to re-word recommendation 1.2, as printed in the report, to read:

1.2 That it be recommended to Cabinet for approval that the annual quota of properties to be allocated under the new provisions be set at 1% of all Council housing allocations for the preceding year (1st April to 31st March), with the provision that officers endeavour to seek mutual exchanges where possible to mitigate the impact on levels of Thurrock Council housing stock.

Councillor MacPherson requested that the minutes of discussion be referred for consideration with the accompanying Cabinet report and asked for the Housing Service to work closely with the Leaving Care team to ensure that young people leaving care were adequately supported.

The Committee agreed that the 'Right to Move' item be referred back to the Committee in January 2016 for review.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the new 'Right to Move' regulations be noted.**
- 2. That it be recommended to Cabinet for approval that the annual quota of properties to be allocated under the new provisions be set at 1% of all Council housing allocations for the preceding year (1st April to 31st March), with the provision that officers endeavour to seek mutual exchanges, where possible, to mitigate the impact on levels of Thurrock Council housing stock.**
- 3. That an update on the Right to Move scheme be referred back to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2016.**