

Housing Sub Committee

Monday, 27 January 2020

Present: Councillor A Newman (Chair)
Councillors L Darke, John Hunter, A Percy, M Reynolds,
M Thirlaway, J Walker, L Bell, P McIntyre, E Parker-
Leonard and M Wilson

Apologies: Councillors F Weetman

HO15/19 Appointment of Substitute Members

There were no substitute members appointed.

HO16/19 Declarations of Interest

Councillor M Thirlaway declared a non-registerable personal interest in Item 5, Empty Homes 'Moving In' and 'Moving Out' Standards, as his father works for North Tyneside Council repairs and maintenance service.

HO17/19 Minutes

It was agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

HO18/19 Empty Homes 'Moving In' and 'Moving Out' Standards

The sub-committee received a presentation which set out the background to previous reviews of the empty homes 'moving in' and 'moving out' standards, proposals for carrying out a further review and how members could become involved in this.

It was noted that a full review of the moving in and moving out standards was carried out in 2015. This incorporated the challenges for local authority housing that emerged from the Welfare Reform Act 2013. A further review was undertaken in 2017 by Elected Members and tenants, which included pre and post inspections of properties to ensure that quality standards were being met and a refresh of the tenant satisfaction surveys.

Members were informed that in April 2017 there were around 450 properties empty which had an impact on rental income. At 31st March 2020 this had fallen to below 200 properties and to date there were 124 empty properties in North Tyneside. This equated to less than 1% of the overall housing stock and it was noted that a lot of work had been done to reduce the number of empty homes.

Following the transition of the repairs service back to the management of the local authority, it was timely to carry out a further review of the moving in and out standards. Members

were invited to get involved in this review and were informed of 2 dates in February 2020, one of which where property inspections would take place and a further date where data collected would be discussed. It was highlighted that the focus on discussions would be new tenant repairs, the gifting of improvements, self-help and satisfaction and complaints.

Members indicated their interest in being involved in property inspections going forward. It was suggested that the logistics of this could be discussed at one of the sessions in February and that with over 25 inspections taking place per week, it would not be feasible for members to attend every inspection, especially as quite often they would be carried out at short notice. It was clarified that, although members had not been invited to property inspections since 2017 as part of the Empty Homes review, these had still routinely been carried out by officers.

A member asked if the outcome of the review would be brought back to the sub-committee at a future date, as there would be some members that would not be able to attend the inspections and further discussions during the day. Officers confirmed that the issues identified as part of the review and the proposals for what the new standards will look like would be reported to the sub-committee. It was suggested that, as a number of members from the Housing sub-committee could not attend meetings during the day, the invitation to attend the sessions as part of the review of the empty homes standard be circulated to all members of the Council.

It was **agreed** to note the presentation and the opportunities for Members to contribute to the review of the empty homes standards.