

Appendix B

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

17 December 2008

7.00pm

Council Chamber, Town Hall

ITEM 9 – HOUSING MUTUAL EXCHANGE

The Chair of the exercise, Councillor Smith, stipulated for this meeting that Officers provide the following information in order to begin the review of the Housing Mutual Exchange process:

1) How many exchanges have been sanctioned so far in the current year - 2008/2009?

These are difficult to track due to the current systems in place. We have someone writing us a new report so that I can find out but that won't be available until next week. The total number of new tenancies started this year was 695 but how many of them were mutual exchange is difficult to track at the moment. The numbers can be provided for the meeting.

2) What are the costs involved in arranging an exchange including the cost of officer time?

The costs incurred vary depending on the number of visits undertaken. On average it takes approximately eight hours of officer time from start to finish for a grade six officer. The other costs are the electrical test and transportation costs. I estimate the cost to be in the region of £500 in total (but I will bring some firmer calculations to the meeting).

3) Is there a Monetary Bond that covers the cost of any necessary repairs or damage cause by existing tenants?

No there is no monetary bond. A pre-inspection is carried out and customers are asked to rectify anything that they are responsible for fixing prior to the move taking place. A second inspection takes place to ensure the work is done prior to the work being sanctioned.

4) As a result of the reviewed policy do you feel that any further adjustments that need to be made?

Yes. There has been an improvement made to the physical inspection process and paperwork required when a Mutual Exchange takes place. The audit undertaken shows that this side of things is working well. The Audit has highlighted that the process of recording the numbers of mutual exchanges etc could be improved and there are also some other recommendations. We

also feel that the customer instructions and advertisement of Mutual Exchange could be updated to improve access. The information on the website could also be better. In addition our Redditch Home Choice Scheme does not cater for those people who want to move out of the area as we only hold adverts for Redditch on the system.

5) How does the Council advertise potential exchanges? Are there any other ways in which the Council could advertise these?

It is done through the Redditch Home Choice System online and also via books in all the One Stop Shops.

We do not currently operate a scheme that helps customers wishing to move out of the area. There is a national scheme that operates to help customers do this called Homeswapper but there is currently a cost incurred by customers if they want to use this. We could subscribe to the scheme at a cost of approximately £2,500. I suggest we get a computer set up for Wednesday, or a future meeting, so that members can have a look for themselves at how the systems operate now.