

Tenancy Strategy consultation – summary of responses.

In developing the Tenancy Strategy extensive consultation took place with a number of stakeholders, providers and tenants. During the three month formal consultation process we received responses from Housing Providers, Tenants, Residents, Town and Parish Councils and community partnerships. Most were in agreement with the content and felt the strategy was a good length

Q4. Do you agree with Wiltshire's expectations of registered providers to set affordable rents of up to 80%?

The majority were in support

Comments:

- a) All RSLs responded positively.
- b) Many of the other 'yes' responses noted warnings about affordability, esp. in relation to the benefit cap, e.g. **'I agree that we should support up to 80% as long as this does not compromise affordability when WR Cap comes in.'**
- c) The primary reason for a 'no' response was the potential for rent arrears / benefit trap / increased pressure on Housing Benefit.
- d) Concern was expressed by residents and the WSTP about the increasing distance between both private and affordable rents, and wages in the county.

If you answered No to Question 4 – What should affordable rents be set at?

A couple had suggested 60%, others made no comment.

Q5. Should the council support the introduction of flexible tenancies?

The majority were in support

Comments:

- a) Some of the 'yes' responses were concerned about how flexible tenancies would be implemented, i.e. the review processes (e.g. WSTP)
- b) WSTP presented a long discussion of the pros and cons of flexible tenancies, expressing concern for **'the potential for discrimination [which] is a strong one, and the adoption of flexible tenancies would be a major departure from the original aims and philosophy of social housing'**
- c) The exceptions (TA, vulnerability, secure pre-1/4/2012) were supported
- d) See Greensquare's response reported in qu.9

Q6: Should we include any other exclusions within the strategic tenancy policy?

The majority felt no other exclusions were required

If you answered yes what other exclusions would you like to see included?

Aster: any customer of retirement age who is living in a home which is suitable for their needs e.g. 1 bed property not classed as older persons' accommodation or extra care.

Councillor: need a special circumstances clause, e.g. for witness protection, safeguarding issues.

Q7. Should the council be recommending any other review criteria that would assist households in finding alternative accommodation at the end of a tenancy?

The majority answered No.

If you answered yes what other review criteria would you like to see included?

WSTP: The request for RPs to pay attention to adaptations is too vague; a hand rail is an adaptation. It needs to be more specific around major adaptations. WSTP also note: 'How the financial capacity of a tenant to secure alternative market accommodation is assessed needs to be much clearer, will all providers apply the same matrix? Urgent work needs to be done with the private sector to agree standards, security of tenure etc. Will advice be available to tenants?'

Aster: 'Tenants who have been served notice will need assistance to explore their options for alternative accommodation. This assistance will need to be provided by the registered provider who served the notice as well as the Council's housing options team. The proposed wording confers this responsibility solely on registered providers and we suggest it should be amended to also reflect the Council's role.'

Councillor: 'if we are encouraging people to downsize, if they are still eligible for affordable housing, perhaps we ask that they be given bonus points to enable them to be higher up the transfer list?'

Q8. Should we be recommending more than one right to succeed to a spouse or partner only?

The majority had answered No.

Comments:

- a) 'siblings should be included in the right to succession especially in the case of one parent families, or a carer that is not a spouse'
- b) 'I agree with 1 right to succeed, but I am aware of cases where there was an older child living in the house and no spouse or partner and it was necessary for that child to remain in the property, so I would like to see that we do not prohibit that.'

Q9. Will your organisation's own policies reflect the expectations in our draft strategic tenancy policy?

Minimal response.

If you answered 'no' or 'partially' please explain why?

A2Dominion: answered 'not sure' and commented: **'We are currently in the process of preparing options paper to be considered by Executive Management Team in late April and will be in a better position after this to advice on the detail of our proposed Tenancy Strategy.'**

Greensquare: answered 'no' and commented: **'We are offering lifetime tenancies as a default, and only using short term tenancies if there is a very specific need for them. We are very concerned that fixed terms tenancies will have a negative impact on a community. We think moving people around will be unsettling and not contribute to sustainability. Your policy on page 8 says that you "would offer the tenant an alternative property". I don't think that this is feasible, given the housing need problems in the area. We will also keep flexibility around succession rights.'**

The 'partially' response was a complaint from an unnamed respondent about the assumption that only RSLs provide affordable housing – parish councils, villages should be able to as well.

Q11. If you have any further comments you would like to make about the Strategic tenancy policy 2012-2016

Two comments:

- a) **The method that the council uses to determine future Social housing needs for the area need adjusting. Not including under 25's who live in parent's homes in the calculation is wrong as they should have the same rights to housing as any other adult. Also not including families in rented accomodation who have a combined income of £25k or over is unfair as the individuals could still be below the poverty line.**
- b) **The Bronze category should be removed now to reduce administration time and the Silver category could also be removed, pending a full review, while the annual level of lettings is so low. The banding criteria should be fully reviewed with the aim of reducing the Waiting List to a reasonable length say 5,000.**