

Report from the Cabinet Member for Health Housing & Adult Social Services, November 2013.

Introduction

An affordable, decent quality and warm home is key to residents' health and wellbeing and to children's educational attainment. It is a phrase I will continue to use until every resident of this City has the choice of a decent home. To expect people to move away because of the cost of living here is not acceptable even if this is the view of some in this City and Government Ministers.

As a Council and in conjunction with our partners we are delivering good services and are receiving praise from many quarters even at times when budgets are being cut. We continue to receive praise from Government in the form of Grants for our ideas and work and I encourage Officers to bid for all grants that are 'advertised'. This is extremely important at a time when we have many homes in the City which are falling into the 'hazardous' homes category due to energy inefficiency, due to the poor take up of the expensive Green Deal, and structural conditions which make them difficult for older residents to live in. Whilst currently this is mainly in the Private Rented Sector homes in private ownership are starting to enter this category. Whilst we have a better than average housing stock we must not become complacent.

Looking ahead, for many York residents living with the highest Private Sector rents outside of the South East life is becoming more of a struggle. Rents continue to rise as we do not have the supply of homes the City needs.

Social Housing Waiting List - year end 31 Mar 2013

- 4692

There is expected to be seen in the current year a reduction in this number due to policy changes, in September, to the North Yorkshire Home Choice Letting scheme and an ongoing process to ensure applicants renew their application if they have not been actively bidding on properties – this is the first major refresh of applications for a number years.

The changes have been made to reduce the numbers who are in Bronze Band and reflect the need to have a realistic approach. Following research and consultation many applicants in Bronze Band were saying that the policy gave people unrealistic expectations with few of them having any chance of being allocated a home. The changes also recognise that a

significant number on the list who have assets or sufficient income can realise a move in the home ownership market or the private rented sector.

The key changes are listed below.

- Ensuring local people have priority by restricting the register to people who have a local connection
- Supporting balanced and sustainable communities by preventing people with a history of serious Anti-Social Behaviour issues from qualifying for social housing
- Excluding homeowners who have no recognised housing need either for economic or social reasons
- Introducing a financial threshold for people who have a combined household income and/or capital and assets of £60,000 plus and who may be able to meet their own housing needs. It is recognised some people, in particular the elderly, may need to move into specialist accommodation and alternative housing advice will be given to them
- Allocating properties to meet applicants' assessed bedroom need
- To make the process fair, penalties to exclude persons from the register have been introduced. These include persons, who provide false information, deliberately withhold information or who have deliberately worsened their housing circumstances

In addition to these changes Officers have been completing the annual review of applications that always leads to some cancellation of applications. The number on the list now is around 2400 which is a significant and welcome reduction and this is highlighted in the performance report to Cabinet on 5th Nov.

Below is the link to the allocations policy

http://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/download/781/north_yorkshire_housing_allocation_policy

Homelessness

Figures for year end 31 Mar 2013:

- 746 households prevented/relieved from homelessness (993 in 11/12)
- 218 homeless decisions taken (stable from 215 in 11/12)
- 146 household accepted as homeless and in priority need (151 in 11/12)
- 99 households in temporary accommodation (93 at 31 Mar 2012, but around 99 over most of last two years, 1.18% per 1000 households, below 2.38% national average)
- 8 rough sleepers as at single night in Dec 2012 (up from 2 in 11/12)

Following a successful stakeholder event in July 2012 and 4 consultation events in October/November including the Supporting People User Group a new **Homelessness Strategy** 2013-18 has been agreed and was approved by Cabinet on 5th March 2013. The report can be viewed at http://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/6961/homelessness_strategy_2013-2018

- £279k CLG funds were awarded to York and North Yorkshire to tackle rough sleeping, with delivery to be overseen by York.
- Launch of *No Second Night Out* rough sleeper scheme January 2013 by the Archbishop of York

Peaseholme Centre - Ofsted inspectors were extremely positive during their inspection of the Peaseholme Centre. They reported standard of service and facilities as excellent, with customers clearly benefiting from the service.

Voids

- Average re-let time 21.66 days (down from 25.09 days in 11/12)
Time taken includes 'Tenants Choice' backfill. Until this year tenants had the option to refuse whole or part replacement of kitchens and bathrooms which has meant that each year a number of properties require extensive work before they could be re-let

How many homes let - year end 31 Mar 2013

- 487 properties re-let excluding temp accommodation (513 in 11/12)

How much tenants choice and backfill- year end 31 Mar 2013

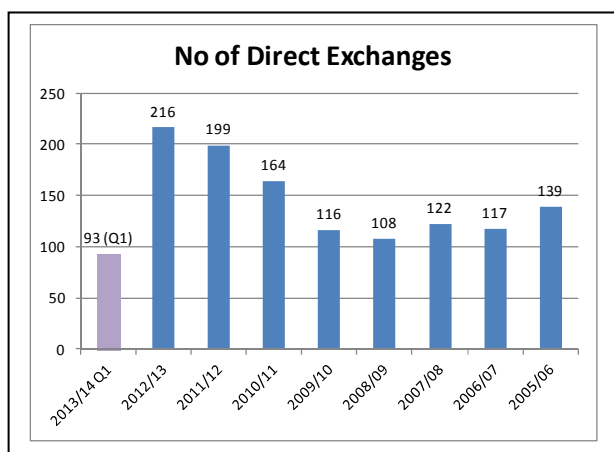
- 210 homes received Tenants' Choice improvement

Windows completed- year end 31 Mar 2013

- 327 homes received new UPVC double glazing

Bedroom Tax info- year end 31 Mar 2013

The impact on CYC tenants has reduced from 1,138 in April 2013 to 1,017. This reduction has in large part being achieved by tenants downsizing through mutual exchange. However, to reduce those negatively affected to zero will take about 10 years. The Government, in the form of Lord Freud, have now admitted that downsizing is not possible due to there not being enough smaller property available. There has been an increase in Direct Exchanges and this is put down to the Bedroom Tax – see tables:



	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10	2008/09	2007/08
Q1	93	45	46	57	26	41	35
Q2	79	60	52	36	23	18	36
Q3		53	51	34	27	35	20
Q4		58	50	37	40	14	31
Grand Total		216	199	164	116	108	122

Actual at 16/09/13	RSLs	CYC	Combined
Total HB caseload	3,032	5,148	8,180
No. Affected	377	640	1,017
% caseload affected	12.4%	12.4%	12.4%
With dependants	134	249	383
Lone parent h/h	96	172	268
1 bedroom excess	333	541	874
2+ bedroom excess	44	99	143
Predicted av. Loss per wk	£14.81	£13.73	£14.12
for 1 bedroom excess	£13.63	£12.21	£12.75
for 2+ bedroom excess	£23.75	£21.99	£22.53
Total annual loss	£290,407	£421,632	£712,039

Bedroom Tax Figures

Rent arrears at end of October are £876,634. At the same week last year they were £833,898, increase of £42,736.

The Council and its Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners have a wide range of measures in place to mitigate the impacts of 'bedroom tax' and wider welfare reform. This includes a joint Housing Benefit/ Housing Options/ Salvation Army initiative has been developed to use the £27k DWP money to target those affected by further welfare benefit reforms.

Almost all affected households have been contacted and spoken to to enable them to explore a range of options including:

- Dedicated employment and debt advice workers
- Reviewing employment opportunities
- Discount schemes and utility switching
- Advice on claiming Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs)
- Assessing whether non-dependants can contribute
- Scheme to support downsizing costs up to £2500 per household
- Relaxed policy on direct exchange/transfers where arrears exist
- Prioritising downsizers on new build schemes

A specialist “Money Matters” newsletter has been developed (3 editions so far) focusing on welfare reform, housing benefit changes, universal credit, debt and money management advice

Work with schools – Housing services have been looking at alternative venues to run advice sessions. We have piloted a scheme with Westfield School where CAB and housing officers are running sessions.

Discretionary Housing Payments accessed

- 350% increase in DHP applications compared to same period (Mar-Sep) in 12/13.

DHP applications received

2012	268 full year
2013 Mar - Sept	517

DHPs processed

2012	127
2013 Apr - Sept	426

DHP Spend

	2012	2013
	Full yr	Apr/Sept
Total	£99,353	£88,731
DWP Grant	£116,422	£286,409

Tenant and Leaseholder annual report 2012/13

The report is extensive and can be found at

http://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/9692/tenants_and_leaseholders_annual_report_2012_2013 It has in-depth information about what has been delivered/achieved in relation to City of York Council housing stock i.e. 9

out of 10 tenants are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live, 8 out of 10 are happy with repairs and maintenance service etc

A new post, Tenant Engagement and Equalities Facilitator has been established to further develop tenant engagement and involvement activities.

- The **Tenant Inspectors** have recently completed a review of the voids lettable standard “Your Home Our Promise” which they have presented to the housing management team.
- A **Tenant Scrutiny Panel** Taster Session was held with 15 interested tenants during Housing Week 2012. Subsequently 11 attended the first official Tenant Scrutiny Panel in December 2012 where they drafted the terms of reference and have since looked at local housing standards. The action plan for the first year also includes considering the Business Plan and the Asset Management Strategy.
- The Antisocial Behaviour Panel has been re-established with 25 residents being invited to the quarterly meetings. This Panel is currently reviewing the ASB survey and looking at performance information.

Residents Federation – Once again I would like to praise the work that the excellent Residents Federation undertakes. This is not just a forum for Council Tenants but also for private residents associations to join –such as Sovereign Park – and I look forward to this group’s continued work in the City. Last month the Federation celebrated its 25th anniversary and it was good to see faces old and new there and I look forward to them celebrating many more milestones in the future.

New housing supply

- Supported delivery of 127 affordable homes
- The *Get York Building* Board, established September 2012, comprises a £7m investment programme of projects designed to facilitate increased housing supply. Planning permission has been given for Beckfield Lane.
- The new *HRA Business Plan & Asset Management Strategy* identified a £75.5m five year investment fund for existing council homes and £20m to support the commitment to build 60 new council homes by 2018.
- A 'City-Centre Living' audit was completed, exploring the residential potential of empty commercial properties. This showed potential for 360,000sq ft of useable space.
- Agreement to convert former White Swan hotel into 18 apartments at affordable rent with a target for 35 more on other city centre sites

York Housing Week Oct 2013

This year Housing Week had a focus on poverty. Events were held around the City at Community venues which focused on financial matters such as Loan Sharks and Benefit checks and there was a ‘Property Swap Shop’ held at Priory Street. Seminars included Mental Health & Housing, Living

above the Shop, Private Landlords and the week finished with the Seminar which explored the links between Poor Housing and Poverty.

Hundreds of people attended during the week including developers, Housing Associations, voluntary sector, landlords, academics, Councillors and Officers from York and other Local Authorities and residents.

Discussions have already started on how we can build on this year's event for next year and it is hoped to have a final program by the summer

Private rented sector

Following Cabinet approval, the *Private Landlord Accreditation Scheme* is in development

Rent rises in the Private Rented Sector

Room: 7.2% increase 2 bed: 4% increase

The above are the current rent increases in year in York. These are significantly more than Government is proposing to raise future benefits by.

Localism Act

- York's first *Tenancy Strategy* was approved
- Extensive consultation informed the revised Allocations and North Yorkshire Home Choice policies to be considered by Cabinet June 2013
- A *Tenant Scrutiny Panel* was established January 2013
- Nine *Community-Based Service Delivery Sessions* are operational, many of which offer multi-agency advice on housing, debt and employment

Welfare Reform Act

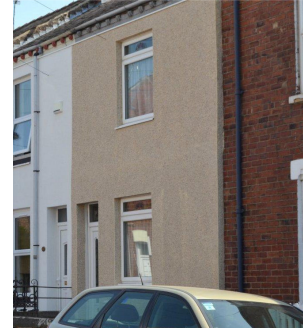
- Two new *Money and Employment Advisor* posts were created, operational early 2013.
- 808 under-occupying tenants were visited to help them prepare for the implementation of the 'bedroom tax' April 2013.
- A targeted *Under-Occupation Incentive Scheme* was developed
- £27k DWP funds were used to target private renters affected by welfare reforms
- A specialist *Money Matters* newsletter for tenants was developed to focus on welfare reform, housing benefit changes, universal credit, debt and money management advice
- A city-wide multi-agency *Welfare Reform Task Group* was established
- *Tang Hall Advice hub* has started with a further Community Hub being established in the West of the City

Landlord services

- Launch of *Flexible Direct Exchange Policy* allowing customers in financial and social hardship another option to obtain a move
- *Leaseholder Forum* resurrected and quarterly meetings organised

Protect the environment

- *Green Deal* funds were successfully secured In October 2012, with Cabinet approving the Leeds City Region delivery model in April 2013
- £447k DECC funds were awarded to install heating and insulation in the homes of fuel-poor vulnerable residents.
- £124k Green Deal grants were awarded for solid wall insulation trials and these are currently being installed across York.
- Six regional pilot community energy collective switching schemes have been funded by a £300k DECC grant.
- £341k CERT funds enabled private sector residents to access energy efficiency measures.
- Over 400 council homes have now benefited from the installation of photovoltaic panels.
- City of York Council Home Energy Conservation Plan 2013 – 2015 can be found at http://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/download/2427/home_energy_conservation_act



An external cladded home in Leeman Rd

Older people

- *Positive Ageing – Housing Choices*, the *Older Peoples' Housing Options Guide* was launched in Housing Week 2012 and followed, at customers' suggestion, by monthly outreach sessions in the community
- First *Supported Housing Strategy* underwent consultation March 2013.
- The transfer of *Sheltered Housing* management from Adult Services was completed June 2013

Student Housing

I have been asked to sit on the Student Community Partnership 'Housing Sub Group. The first meeting was held in October at York St John's. Dave Merrett and myself met with York St John's to discuss their concerns and needs regarding future student accommodation.

Gypsies and Travellers

- Cabinet agreed the first *Gypsy & Traveller Strategy* June 2013.
- A new '*Travellers Choice*' refurbishment scheme was launched to deliver a programme of improvements informed by customer preference.
- £342k Homes & Community Agency funds were awarded for the creation of six new *Traveller Pitches* at the Osbaldwick site.
- The planning application, for the much needed expansions was approved at planning in October and Cabinet agreed funding to support the works on the 5th Nov.

Grants awarded

Council successfully obtained *Warmer Winter Healthy* funding of £18k from DOH, in partnership with Age UK, York and Yorkshire Energy Partnership, to assist and give advice to older residents on how to keep warm over the winter. CYC also led on a sub-regional *Fuel Poverty* bid to DECC for replacement boilers - within York 60 households will benefit.

Orlit Homes - a £800k project, to refurbish 84 post war non traditional Orlit homes including re-roofing, loft insulation, new UPVs double glazed windows, structural repairs and masonry painting has taken place.

Empty Homes – the Officer dedicated to working on the City's empty homes has removed 198 homes from the list of those empty since April 2011 and attracted £2m of *New Homes Bonus* over 6 years. Working with the Health Service the demolition of 83 condemned nursing homes also took place – resulting in £500k of Empty Homes Bonus over 6 years.

Local Plan - Also with regard to the Local Plan and need for Housing I have been looking at the births and deaths in York for the last 10 years. I think there is some interesting data here which can be useful at the next stage of arguing the need for more homes.

	Births	Deaths	Diff
2003	3021	2381	640
2004	3270	2236	1034
2005	3311	2292	1019
2006	3247	2247	1000
2007	3255	2240	1015
2008	3565	2320	1245
2009	3495	2408	1087
2010	3404	2303	1101
2011	3461	2416	1045
2012	3481	2378	1103

Attended

- Leeds City Region HCA (Leeds) – Jan, June, October
- York & North Yorks Strategic Housing Forum -
- Living Above the Shop Forum Meeting - Jan
- Bedroom Tax Forum (Manchester) – June
- Bedroom Tax Forum (Birmingham) - September
- LGA All Parliamentary Group (House of Commons, London) – June
- Residents Federation
- Resident Federation Training Day – Feb 2013
- Peashome
- York Housing Association
- York High & Millthorpe Deputy Heads meeting– changes to Housing and Welfare
- Inside Housing interview
- Inside Housing Blog for Housing Week
- The Guardian - interview on EPH's
- Jack Dromey MP – Housing