

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT

Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
Ian Maher	Cabinet Member Regeneration and Housing	November - December 2011

1. Housing Market Renewal – CPO

Compulsory Purchase Orders issued for Bedford/Queens Phase 3 and Klondyke Phase 1B have now been confirmed by the Secretary of State. A 6 week 'Challenge Period' has passed without appeals. Following the 'Challenge Period' the vesting process can begin. There have been recent discussions with the 4 remaining owner-occupiers at Bedford-Queens about their housing options. Early indications are that 2 will actively seek re-housing. A public meeting was held with Klondyke residents on 13th September.

2. Housing Options Service

The new SLA with Light for Life has been agreed and signed, which protects the Southport Housing Advice service until March 2013. The Council is committed to entering into a sub-regional Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme. The scheme will be operated on our behalf by OVH, similar to that currently provided as the 'Homesearch' service. We have entered into contract with the other LA Partners and the IT System supplier, Abritas. It is hoped the new system, and approved CBL Policy, will come into effect circa May 2012. Negotiations have begun to agree a new service level agreement between the Council and OVH, for this revised service.

The Government has recently confirmed provision of funding of £120,000 to the City region, under the auspices of "no second night out", to help tackle rough sleeping. The 6 LA's (Sefton, Liverpool, Knowsley, Wirral, Halton and St. Helens) have agreed in principle how to use this funding between now and March 2013 when the project ends.

Proposal is based on 1.4 staff: 1 (Full time) outreach worker & a 0.4 manager. Outreach worker will respond to the reports of rough sleeping across each authority, undertake assessments of need, work with existing providers, and find solutions to bring indoors and prevent no second night out. Manager will co-ordinate provision across authorities, facilitate the tracking meetings / single point of contact and provide additional outreach provision.

As the funding is time limited and the policy includes regular performance information, it is possible that we could uncover some unmet needs in Sefton. We need to be mindful that when the initiative has finished there could be service needs to be met.

3. Private Sector Housing Standards Service

The (2009) Private Sector Housing Strategy includes an objective to set up a (voluntary) Landlord Accreditation scheme in Sefton. Due to declining budgets and staff reductions, this has yet to be progressed. To support the Council's Strategic Housing aims, OVH have agreed to fund a feasibility study to investigate the possibility of establishing a scheme. In collaboration with Council staff, they have appointed Wirral Council to carry out this work [Wirral have a well regarded and

established scheme].

The study will include consultations with landlords and letting agencies and other stakeholder services.

A key issue will be to consider ways any scheme could be funded - to meet both set up and ongoing running costs. There is continued focus on dealing with empty homes. Officers are continuing to look at carrying out a more proactive project, focussed on Southport. Earlier this year we completed our first enforced sale of an empty property, which has now been brought back into use. A further 6 cases are being considered for a similar course of action.

4. Housing Strategy

The Localism Bill will require the Council to introduce a new **Tenancy Strategy**. This will require us to provide policy guidance to RSLs, covering;

- the types of tenancies they grant, including fixed term/flexible tenancies
- the circumstances under which fixed term tenancies should be used
- the term of fixed term tenancies
- circumstances to extend or end fixed term tenancies

As most RSLs operate across a number of Local Authority Boundaries on Merseyside, officers are meeting with counterparts from the Liverpool City Region, to explore the option of a joint Strategy, or at least one with some level of commonality.

- 5. Liverpool City Region Local Investment Plan.** At a sub-regional level, the 6 LAs have been developing an Investment Plan, to be agreed with the HCA. Once finalised, this will help guide and prioritise any future HCA Investment resources.

6. Kew Housing Development Site

A report was presented to Cabinet in October seeking authority to enter into detailed contractual negotiations with David Wilson Homes. The Heads of Terms associated with this will be presented back to Cabinet in early December for agreement which will allow a Planning Application to be submitted prior to Christmas.

The planning application is likely to be made up of three component parts, a detailed application for both the housing proposals and the Extra Care Scheme and an outline application for the commercial development.

The same report to Cabinet detailed the likely numbers of affordable housing units as determined by the appraisal completed by Three Dragons.

7. Southport Market

Works are progressing well on Phase 1 of the project. The quality of the workmanship seems good and the site is being maintained in an orderly fashion.

Whilst suffering some delay early in the project, the Contractor is now making good progress and should be in a position to hand over the facility in mid June. Negotiations are progressing with a number of new traders and interest in the market continues to grow. At present 62% of the stalls are let or under offer and with further interest it is expected that the take up will increase to nearer 85% as the project approaches handover. This ties in with the prediction within the Business Plan. The project remains within the approved budget.