



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 1ST OCTOBER 2013

SUBJECT: NOTICE OF MOTION - 'BEDROOM TAX'

REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

- 1.1 A Notice of Motion - 'Bedroom Tax' was received by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on the 24th July 2013 during their deliberations it was agreed that further investigations would be required in order to take two key issues forward. The Member's of that Committee considered the Caerphilly Homes Task Group to be the best platform for this given its remit and membership.
- 1.2 Following that recommendation a special meeting of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group was called in order to consider the issues of no-eviction and the re-classification of properties.
- 1.3 The Task Group met on the 28th of August 2013 in order to fully discuss the legal, financial and equality implications associated with no-eviction and re-classification. Representatives from other Registered Social Landlords were invited to attend and a representative from Charter Housing was present at the meeting. The Task Group received updates on the position of other Local Authorities (including Cardiff Council) and Registered Social Landlords in this regard.
- 1.4 Having fully discussed the issues and considered all the implications of no-eviction and reclassification the Caerphilly Homes Task Group made the following recommendations to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee: -
 1. The Caerphilly Homes Task Group could not support the introduction of a no-eviction policy.
 2. The Caerphilly Homes Task Group could not support a full re-designation policy, however under a specific criteria there might be a limited number of properties where reclassification would be suitable and if appropriate this option should be actively pursued.
 3. The Caerphilly Homes Task Group fully supported the following initiatives:-
 - Waive limited breaches of tenancy to assist with transfers e.g. certain levels of arrears and property condition
 - Award tenants affected by the under-occupancy rules additional points to assist their transfer to more suitable accommodation.
 - Pursue opportunities to increase the use of the private sector for suitable alternative properties.
 - Continue to provide practical/financial support to those tenants who wish to downsize e.g. signposting, debt and financial management advice, assist

applications for DHP, energy advice, referral to voluntary sector for assistance, assistance to move home, fast-track referral to Job Centre Plus.

- Increase the provision of 1 and 2 bed properties on future new developments in conjunction with RSL partners
- In limited circumstances convert vacant properties into smaller units of accommodation where appropriate to do so e.g. houses into flats
- Introduce the requirement for tenants who are in arrears to attend compulsory money management workshops/one to one sessions
- Consider reclassifying some properties where appropriate and review rooms, which are classified as bedrooms but are unable to accommodate the size of a standard single bed.
- Develop step-by-step procedures for dealing with arrears so that the processes being followed are open and transparent to all.
- Introduce a Tenancy Review Panel to scrutinise proposed evictions prior to progressing cases to court and make recommendations to the Chief Housing Officer.
- Regular updates on the Welfare Reform impacts to be presented to CHTG and Policy and Resources scrutiny meetings

1.5 Members are now asked to note the discussions and deliberations of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group and consider its recommendations.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 Notice of Motion Report - Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee - 24th July 2013
Appendix 2 Minutes of the Special Caerphilly Homes Task Group Meeting - 28th August 2013