



To: The Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)

Date: 13th July 2023

Subject: Coventry Homefinder Policy 12 Month Review

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To update the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) following the 12–18-month review report of the Coventry Homefinder Policy and accompanying IT system following their implementation in September 2021.
- 1.2 To draw the Scrutiny Boards attention to the report and its key findings, the impacts that have been identified, and the housing needs of those who are on the housing register, versus the supply and availability of social housing properties within Coventry.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board is recommended to:
 - 1) Note the information and key findings detailed within the report; and
 - 2) Identify any further recommendations for the Cabinet Member in respect of the operation of the Homefinder Policy

3 Information / Background

- 3.1 The Coventry Homefinder Policy was implemented in September 2021 following a review and public consultation. The Policy was implemented alongside a new IT system and the partnership acts as a single point of access for those requiring social housing in Coventry. The new scheme means that only those with an assessed housing need qualify to join the housing register.
- 3.2 The Coventry Homefinder Policy has five key objectives:
 - Operate within the legal framework
 - Be realistic, simple, and transparent
 - Make best use of housing stock
 - Lettings properties quickly
 - Create balanced and sustainable communities
- 3.3 At the point that the new policy was introduced, the service committed to carrying out a review of the impact and effectiveness of both the new policy and the operation of the new IT system after both 6 and 12 months. This review report includes data from both 12 and 18 months of operation.

- 3.4 The review examines feedback from partners of the scheme, including Registered Housing Providers that operate within Coventry, and representatives from Coventry Advice Agencies. The review evaluates each objective that the policy aims to achieve, recognises achievements, and addresses any issues that have been raised by partners for further development of the scheme.
- 3.5 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out alongside the review, to measure and mitigate against any impact that the policy has had on particular groups within the City.
- 3.6 The report outlines the current position of the scheme and the role that it has had in the first 18 months on those requiring social housing in Coventry and the subsequent impact that is linked to those owed duties by the statutory homelessness service. The report also outlines the current needs of those who are presently on the housing register and gives a breakdown of numbers in each key priority group who are able to bid for available properties on the register.
- 3.7 The report also demonstrates both the supply and demand of social housing within the City and the number of properties that have come available for letting within the first 18 months of the scheme being active. It also outlines the current level of need that is presently on the housing register and gives a breakdown of those in each priority band and the reasons for their housing need.

4 Wider Housing Context

- 4.1 The report outlines the current demand for housing in Coventry and the wait times experienced for residents who are waiting for suitable accommodation. There are some additional factors that can also be considered to give some context to the ongoing demand.
- 4.2 There has been an increase in homelessness nationally and 'No Fault' evictions and increasing cost of living are both contributory factors for many households who are experiencing homelessness or seeking alternative housing. The local housing allowance was frozen in 2020 and many households are not able to secure or retain private rented accommodation that is affordable to them.
- 4.3 The national trends in homelessness are reflected locally in Coventry, with the Housing & Homelessness service receiving increased approaches from those who are requiring housing assistance. Coventry currently has the highest number of households who are living in temporary accommodation that we have experienced, many of which are awaiting a permanent offer of housing from the housing register with the supply of available properties significantly short of what is required to meet this demand, particularly for the larger three bed plus properties.
- 4.4 Coventry has a buoyant private rental market and increasing rents mean that many are not able to access private rented accommodation as an alternative to social housing. Some landlords are choosing to exit the market completely which leaves fewer private rented properties available in the already competitive market.

5 Appendices

- 5.1 Appendix 1 – Coventry Homefinder 12-18 Month Report

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