






**Report of:** Community Housing Business Manager

**To:** Executive Board



















**Date:** 9 October 2006

**Item No:**

**Title of Report :** Local Lettings Plan For Gibbs Crescent

**Summary and Recommendations**

**Purpose of report:** A management & lettings plan to ensure a balanced community in a block of single applicants.

**Key decision:** No

**Portfolio Holder:** Patrick Murray – Improving Housing

**Scrutiny Responsibility:** Housing

**Ward(s) affected:** Jericho & Osney Ward

**Report Approved by**  
**Portfolio Holder:** Patrick Murray  
**Legal:** Imogen Wooder and Jeremy King  
**Finance:** Penny Gardner  
**Strategic Director:** Michael Lawrence

**Policy Framework:** None

**Recommendation(s):** The Board is asked to endorse the introduction of a Local Lettings Plan for Gibbs Crescent, and recommend the Plan to full Council.

## **Background**

1. Gibbs Crescent is owned & managed by Cherwell Housing Trust.
2. It is a development of 86 properties comprising 74 studio flats, 10 1-bedroom flats, & 2 3-bedroom houses. The board of Cherwell Housing Trust has approved a proposal to convert all the studio flats to 1-bed flats as they become vacant. This will make the properties easier to let.
3. Oxford City Council currently has nomination rights to 75% of any vacancies arising in the scheme. This will increase to up to 100% nomination rights with the introduction of the Common Housing Register.
4. There have been some serious management problems at the scheme in recent years. These problems have included vandalism & behavioural issues related to drug & alcohol abuse.
5. Turnover in the scheme has been high. In 2005, 10 tenancies were ended for the following reasons:
  - Abandonment
  - Transfer
  - Death
  - Eviction
6. Of the 86 current residents of Gibbs Crescent, over 50% have an identified support need (which include mental health issues & suspected substance abuse issues). Several agencies provide support to the tenants, including Cherwell Housing Trust's own floating support team.
7. Of the 11 new tenants in 2005, only 3 were nominations from Oxford City Council.

## **Purpose of the Local Lettings Plan**

8. To stabilise the scheme by having tenants who want to live in the environment of the scheme & who value the property as their settled home.
9. To build a sustainable community within the scheme by having a mix of tenures & offering a range of management initiatives to reduce the number of tenancies that end.
10. To improve the quality of life for all the tenants living in Gibbs Crescent.

## **Management Initiatives**

11. Having a robust management plan for the scheme is integral to implementing a successful lettings plan for any scheme.
12. Cherwell Housing Trust has already set up management & environmental improvements at Gibbs Crescent, working in conjunction with the Crime prevention Officer & the Local Community Beat Officer.
13. These improvements include:
  - Supporting & encouraging an active Residents Association
  - Regular attendance of the Residents association meetings by the Housing Officer
  - Fortnightly scheme inspections by the Housing Officer
  - A tenancy Sustainment Officer to support all new tenants within the first 6 weeks of their tenancy
  - Welcome visits by the Housing Officer 6 weeks after tenants move in. This is to ensure they have settled in & have no outstanding issues that need to be dealt with
  - Restricted access to the scheme to reduce drug-related activities
  - Lockable bike sheds
  - Annual gardening competition
  - Skip amnesty

## **Lettings Proposals**

14. It is proposed that the Local Lettings Plan will be introduced for Gibbs Crescent for 12 months initially
15. The following criteria will be adhered to by Oxford City Council & Cherwell Housing Trust:
  - Tenants must be at least 18 years old
  - No children allocated as part of the household for the flats in the scheme
  - Starter Tenancies (Assured Shorthold Tenancies) are offered to all new tenants
  - Up to 10% of all vacancies can be held back by Cherwell Housing Trust to allow offers to be made to Key Workers, as per Cherwell housing Trust's allocation policy
  - All prospective tenants who have identified support needs must only be allocated to the scheme if they have an on-going & effective support package in place, which is standard Allocations practice for any single accommodation

16. It is proposed that a formal review of the scheme is carried out after 12 months to assess the effectiveness on the Local lettings Plan & consider whether it is necessary to consider extending the lifetime of the plan.

### **Recommendations**

17. Committee is asked to support the introduction of a Local Lettings Plan for Gibbs Crescent, and recommend the Plan to full Council.

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There are no background papers.

