





Report of: Community Housing Business Manager

To: Executive Board














Date: 9 October 2006

Item No:

Title of Report : Local Lettings Plan For Luther Court

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: The report proposes the introduction of a management & lettings plan designed to ensure a balanced community in a block of single flats owned and managed by Cherwell Housing Trust.

Key decision: No

Portfolio Holder: Patrick Murray – Improving Housing

Scrutiny Responsibility: Housing

Ward(s) affected: Carfax Ward

Report Approved by

Portfolio Holder: Patrick Murray
Legal: Imogen Wooder
Finance: Penny Gardner
Strategic Director: Michael Lawrence

Policy Framework: None

Recommendation(s): The Board is asked to approve the introduction of a Local Lettings Plan for Luther Court, and to recommend the Plan to full Council.



Background

1. Luther Court is owned & managed by Cherwell Housing Trust.
2. It is a development of 56 properties comprising 14 studio flats, 39 1-bedroom flats, & 2 2-bedroom flats.
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 murder, burglary vandalism, behavioural issues related to drug & alcohol abuse & people 'rough sleeping' in the communal stairwells (scheme is located adjacent to the Night Shelter).
5. Turnover in the scheme has been high. In 2005, 10 tenancies were ended for the following reasons:
 - Abandonment
 - Transfer
 - Death
 - Eviction
 - Social/neighbour problems
6. Of the 56 current residents of Luther Court, 20 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 8 new tenants in 2005, 4 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 Luther Court.

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 Luther Court, working in conjunction with the Crime prevention Officer & the Local Community Beat Officer.
13. These improvements include:
 - Regular meetings with the Nightshelter
 - 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
 - Improved main entrance security
 - Regular Police patrols

Lettings Proposals

14. It is proposed that the Local Lettings Plan will be introduced for Luther Court 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 25% 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
 - Careful consideration must be made by Oxford City Council before nominating anyone with a history of being vulnerable to exploitation by others
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. The Board is asked to support the introduction of a Local Lettings Plan for Luther Court, and to recommend the Plan to full Council.

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There are no background papers.

