



AGENDA ITEM: 6(t)

CABINET: 13th September 2011

Report of: Director of People and Places / Transformation

Relevant Head of Service: Housing and Property Maintenance Services

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor Mrs V Hopley / Councillor I Grant

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SUBJECT: ELMSTEAD DEVELOPMENT-INITIAL PROPERTY ALLOCATION

Wards affected: Tanhouse Ward

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To update Members on the progress of the Elmstead new build development and seek Member approval to allocate the 17 Council properties at Elmstead through the Choice Based Lettings system (Home finder) but for the initial allocations only to use an agreed local connection criteria.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That subject to consideration of the minute of the Landlord Services Committee (Cabinet Working Group), attached as an Appendix to the report, initial allocation of properties at Elmstead be approved, using the local connection criteria of applicants living in Tanhouse 1&2 (Egerton, Ennerdale, Enstone, Elmridge, Elmstead and Elswick).

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 This Council submitted a bid to the HCA at the end of July 2009 requesting Social Housing Grant of £807,000. The bid identified a Council owned land site in Elmstead, Skelmersdale for the development of 17 new affordable homes for social rent. This Council land was held for housing purposes.

3.2 The total cost of this scheme is £1,721,000, which will be funded from £807,000 of grant and from £914,000 of Council funding.

- 3.3 The proposed development was granted planning permission in April 2010 and following a successful tender process, Fawley Construction Limited was awarded the contract and started on site in January 2011.

4.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 The construction of the new build properties at Elmstead in Skelmersdale remains on target, the development consists of eight two-bedroom houses, five three-bedroom houses and four two-bedroom bungalows. The properties will be high-quality, energy-efficient properties that are well-insulated and this is likely to mean lower fuel bills for the tenants.

Completion and handover of the first four properties are scheduled for October 2011. Handover of all 17 properties is scheduled as follows:

Plots 1 & 2	11/10/2011
Plots 3 & 4	11/10/2011
Plots 5 - 10	15/11/2011
Plots 11 - 13	29/11/2011
Plots 14-17	13/12/2011 [Bungalows]

- 4.2 Officers are now looking to allocate these properties, which are the first new Council homes to be built for 15 years. Their development has been supported by the residents of Tanhouse and in particular those living in Elmstead, Elmridge and Elswick, some of whose properties are adjacent to the construction site and will have had some minor local disruption.
- 4.3 It is therefore proposed that the allocation of the initial tenancies to these new properties be undertaken outside the normal allocations policy using the local connection as applicants living in ***Egerton, Ennerdale, Enstone, Elmridge, Elmstead and Elswick***
- 4.4 The use of this exception in the initial allocation would enable properties to be offered to existing Council tenants with a local connection to the Tanhouse area which would assist in integrating into the community the tenants of the new build properties with existing tenants and residents in adjacent properties.
- 4.5 As with any existing tenants wishing to downsize, those relevant applicants expressing an interest in one of the new build properties, which will result in release of a larger property, will be given a Band A priority on the Housing Register.
- 4.6 Should any properties remain unallocated having used the above criteria then they will be advertised through Home finder and allocated in the normal manner. All future allocations will also comply with the normal allocations policy.

5.0 CHANGES TO HOUSING BENEFIT REGULATIONS

- 5.1 From April 2013 Housing Benefit for working age (16 – pension age) tenants will only cover the size of property that they are assessed to need. Tenants will be expected to notify changes within a year as household members move out and

the implication of the reduction in the number of persons in the household will be a reduction in housing benefit paid. It may also be a problem for people living on their own particularly if there aren't any other suitable properties.

- 5.2 A number of tenants living in Council accommodation in Tanhouse have attended consultation events held at the Sea Cadets Meeting Room. They not only expressed an interest in the new properties but some informed that they would wish to downsize. This would enable the Council to offer their property to a tenant/s with appropriate housing need for larger accommodation.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 6.1 To provide more appropriate and affordable housing to meet the needs of local people, is a corporate priority. The use of a 'local connection criteria' for initial allocation of these properties would also support community sustainability in the area.

7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no financial or resource implications associated with the approval of the recommendation to use Home finder to advertise the properties at Elmstead with local connection criteria for the first tenancies.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 There are no significant risks in exercising this arrangement as it will only apply on the first initial letting.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

The decision does not have any direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Appendices

Minute of the Landlord Services Committee (Cabinet Working Group) – 5 September 2011 (To follow)