



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

COMMUNITY COMMISSION
MONDAY 2 APRIL 2007

ITEM 8

Housing Allocations Policy – early days

BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The new Derby Homefinder IT system, Abritas, went live to customers on Monday 12 February 2007. At the time of drafting this report, there have been four full – weekly – advertising cycles.
- 1.2 Prior to the system going live, in December and January, the Housing Options Centre undertook a full review of the Joint Housing Register. This included writing to every applicant – approximately 10,000 – to advise of the new Policy and request information from them relating to their housing needs, to ascertain which band they should be allocated to and their priority within that band. Applicants were advised that if they didn't respond they ran the risk of being placed in the wrong band, and /or their application being cancelled.
- 1.3 However, only 45% of applicants responded, and so a decision was made to transfer all the data over with the information we had at that time. The review process resulted, in many cases, with applicants identifying additional needs, which require verification prior to being activated on the system. Staff are currently working through these checks.
- 1.4 The Mutual Exchange module requires upgrading. This should be complete by the end of April.

EARLY FINDINGS

- 2.1 All partner housing providers have now been trained on the system, and the early indications are that they are far more satisfied with Abritas than they were previously. All partners are now able to link/update the system – only four partners could do this previously.
- 2.2 Early anecdotal feedback from customers is that the system is far more user-friendly.
- 2.3 The first four weeks have seen a number of glitches, but each time one has occurred Abritas have been very quick to resolve it.
- 2.4 Due to much simpler reporting systems, the Housing Options Centre has far more intelligence available to it in relation to the properties advertised and allocated.

STATISTICS

- 3.1 In the first four weeks, 172 properties have been advertised. Of these, 31 are repeat adverts.
- 3.2 Early indications are that more properties are now being advertised through Derby Homefinder – this needs to be validated.
- 3.3 The following appendices give information on the following:
 - Appendix 1 – Number of applicants on the register
 - Appendix 2 – Number of applicants pending further enquiries
 - Appendix 3 – Number of bids per band
 - Appendix 4 – Method of bidding
 - Appendix 5 – Offers accepted per band
 - Appendix 6 – Offers advertised with age restrictions
 - Appendix 7 – Bids withdrawn by applicants
 - Appendix 8 – Comparison of use with previous system

ISSUES

- 4.1 It is still very early days for determining performance and trends. However, it is clear that the system will enable robust monitoring. It will be able to provide far more information than is provided in this report, for example, ethnicity, age of clients, number of homeless housed by each provider, numbers in need of specific housing etc.
- 4.2 There is a tendency for housing providers to advertise properties to several/all bands. This is an issue we need to pick up with providers.
- 4.3 We are concerned that not enough of the right property types are being advertised to the right emergency band, and we will be discussing this with providers.

RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 That the Commission note this report.
- 5.2 That the Commission receive regular monitoring reports, and identify the issues it wishes to monitor.