

Portfolio for Housing Councillor V C Smith

Report to Council – 11 December 2024

Independent Living Open Days

To celebrate Older Person's day on the 1 October the Housing section hosted three Open Days at Council owned Independent Living Schemes. Residents who have expressed an interest in Independent Living schemes via the Council's Homechoice systems were invited. Over 60 residents attended and spoke to various teams at three venues: Venn Court, Beeston; The Glebe, Eastwood, and Lombardy Lodge, Toton. A number of tenants kindly agreed to open their homes so that people could see the accommodation available.

Our Activities Co-ordinators set up an activity corner where visitors were able to share the different types of activities and clubs that tenants can get involved in. There are very few landlords that offer this type of service, but we understand how important it is to combat loneliness and provide opportunities for people to make new friends and learn new skills.

Due to the success of the events, the Housing Service are looking to host their first Spring Independent Living Open Days next year. This will give the opportunity to promote some of the fantastic outside spaces and gardens that our schemes have and demonstrate some of the Council's outdoor activities.

Right to Buy Changes

The recent budget included some significant changes for Right to Buy, including the reduction of Right to Buy discounts, increase to the cost floor provision and retention of Right to Buy receipts. This is part of the Government's continuing efforts to reform the Right to Buy and to "deliver a fairer and more sustainable scheme, where longstanding tenants can buy their own homes but where Councils can replace those homes".

This news is very welcome and should provide the Council with more resources and flexibility in its housing delivery programme. The retention of 100% of Right to Buy receipts by the Council will enable all receipts from council house sales to be fully reinvested into the housing delivery programme, including acquisitions. Previously Councils could only use 50%. The Council will now also be able to combine Right to Buy receipts with Section 106 contributions, something which was not previously possible. The cap is also being lifted on the percentage of replacements that can be delivered as acquisitions.

Repairs Improvements

A number of system improvements have been introduced over the last two months to improve our repairs service. A new online form has been launched which makes it easier for tenants to report non-urgent repairs online. The tenant will receive a prompt response within one working day with an appointment which is in line with the

times that tenants have stated they are available. In the back office a new diagnosis software and improved schedule of rates has been introduced. This assists Repairs Customer Services Officers to ensure that Repairs are correctly diagnosed each time through presenting them with visual information and helpful prompts. The improved schedule of rates also ensures that the Council has accurate costing information for all repairs jobs.

Annual Tenant Survey

To find out the views of our tenants and to meet the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing, the Housing Service are undertaking our annual tenant survey from November 2024 until January 2025. The same external company is being used as last year to undertake the survey on the Council's behalf. Every tenant will be sent a paper copy of the survey, but there is also the opportunity to complete online or via telephone. The Regulator of Social Housing sets the questions that must be asked, which means that we can benchmark the results with the previous year and other housing providers.

Private Sector Housing

Since July 2024

A Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Remedial Notice has been served.

A prosecution of a private landlord has concluded for a breach of a Section 16 (requisition for information) and a Section 235 Notice requiring documents. A band E fine of £581 based on income of £700 per month and reduced by 10% for a very late guilty plea. A Victim Surcharge of £232 was levied and we were awarded full prosecution costs as per Costs Schedule: £1,129.16.

Seventeen Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) were completed between July and October 2024.

The total spend for mandatory and discretionary DFG's for the year to the end of October 2024 is £560,343.64 with an approved grant commitment of £248,278.14.

Recruitment for two vacant posts are underway for a Housing Grants Officer and a Private Sector Housing Officer.