

Open

Cabinet

Agenda

6.00pm
Tuesday, 23rd October 2012
Council Chamber
Wyre Forest House
Finepoint Way
Kidderminster



Cabinet

The Cabinet Members and their responsibilities:-

Councillor J-P Campion	Leader of the Council
Councillor M J Hart	Deputy Leader, Environmental Services
Councillor N J Desmond	Resources and Transformation
Councillor I Hardiman	Community Well-Being
Councillor A Hingley	Place-Shaping

Scrutiny of Decisions of the Cabinet

The Council has one Scrutiny Committee that has power to investigate policy issues and question members of the Cabinet who have special responsibility for a particular area of the Council's activities. The Cabinet also considers recommendations from this Committee.

In accordance with Section 10 of the Council's Constitution, Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, and Standing Order 2.4 of Section 7, any item on this agenda may be scrutinised by the Scrutiny Committee if it is "called in" by the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and any other three non-Cabinet members.

The deadline for "calling in" Cabinet decisions is 9th November 2012.

Councillors wishing to "call in" a decision on this agenda should contact Sue Saunders, Committee/Scrutiny Officer, Civic Centre, Stourport-on-Severn. Telephone: 01562 732733 or email susan.saunders@wyreforestdc.gov.uk

Urgent Key Decisions

If the Cabinet needs to take an urgent key decision, the consent of the Scrutiny Committee Chairman must be obtained. If the Scrutiny Committee Chairman is unable to act the Chairman of the Council or in his/her absence the Vice-Chairman of the Council, must give consent. Such decisions will not be the subject to the call in procedure.

Declaration of Interests by Members – interests of members in contracts and other matters

Declarations of Interest are a standard item on every Council and Committee agenda and each Member must provide a full record of their interests in the Public Register.

In addition, alongside the Register of Interest, the Members Code of Conduct ("the Code") requires the Declaration of Interests at meetings. Members have to decide first whether or not they have a disclosable interest in the matter under discussion. Please see the Members' Code of Conduct as set out in Section 14 of this constitution for full details.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) / Other Disclosable Interest (ODI)

DPI's and ODI's are interests defined in the Code of Conduct that has been adopted by the District. If you have a DPI (as defined in the Code) in a matter being considered at a meeting of the Council (as defined in the Code), the Council's Standing Orders require you to leave the room where the meeting is held, for the duration of any discussion or voting on that matter. **If you have an ODI (as defined in the Code) you will need to consider whether you need to leave the room during the consideration of the matter.**

For further information: -

If you have any queries about this Agenda or require any details of background papers, further documents or information you should contact Sue Saunders, Committee/Scrutiny Officer, Civic Centre, Stourport-on-Severn. Telephone: 01562 732733 or email susan.saunders@wyreforestdc.gov.uk

Documents referred to in this agenda may be viewed on the Council's website - www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/council/meetings/main.htm

Wyre Forest District Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 23rd October 2012

Council Chamber, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster

Part 1

Open to the press and public

Agenda item	Subject	Page Number
1.	Apologies for Absence	
2.	Declarations of Interests by Members In accordance with the Code of Conduct, to invite Members to declare the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI's) and / or Other Disclosable Interests (ODI's) in the following agenda items and indicate the action that they will be taking when the item is considered. Please see the Members' Code of Conduct as set out in Section 14 of the Council's Constitution for full details.	
3.	Minutes To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on the 18 th September 2012.	5
4.	CALL INS a verbal update will be given on any decisions which have been "called in" since the last meeting of the Cabinet.	
5.	Items Requiring Urgent Attention To consider any item which in the opinion of the Chairman requires consideration at the meeting as a matter of urgency.	
6.	Public Participation In accordance with the Council's Scheme for Public Speaking at Meetings of Full Council/Cabinet, to allow members of the public to present petitions, ask questions, or make statements, details of which have been received by 9 am on Monday 15 th October 2012. (See front cover for contact details).	
7.	Leader of the Council	
7.1	Leader's Announcements	

8. Securing the Economic Prosperity of the District/ Delivering Together, With Less/ Improving Community Well-Being		
	Councillor N J Desmond	
8.1	Council Tax Benefit Reform To consider a report from the Director of Resources on the Council Tax Benefit Reform. <i>(Report to follow.)</i>	-

9. Improving Community Well-Being		
	Cllr A Hingley	
9.1	Wyre Forest Tenancy Strategy To consider a report from the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place and to consider the recommendations from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 4 th October 2012.	12

10. Recommendations from Committees		
10.1	Recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 4th October 2012	
	a. Recommendations from the Housing Review Panel 28th August 2012	60
	b. Revised Statement of Community Involvement – Consultation Draft	62

11.	To consider any other business, details of which have been communicated to the Director of Community Assets & Localism before the commencement of the meeting, which the Chairman by reason of special circumstances considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting.	
12.	Exclusion of the Press and Public To consider passing the following resolution: “That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of “exempt information” as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act”.	

Part 2

Not open to the Press and Public

13.	To consider any other business, details of which have been communicated to the Director of Community Assets & Localism before the commencement of the meeting, which the Chairman by reason of special circumstances considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting.	
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WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

THE EARL BALDWIN SUITE, DUKE HOUSE, CLENSMORE STREET,
KIDDERMINSTER

18TH SEPTEMBER 2012 (6.00PM)

Present:

Councillors: J-P Champion, N J Desmond, I Hardiman, M J Hart and J Phillips.

Observers:

Councillors: L Davies, H E Dyke, F M Oborski, M A Salter and J A Shaw.

CAB.10 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

CAB.11 Declarations of Interests by Members

No declarations of interest were made.

CAB.12 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 19th June 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.13 Call Ins

No decisions had been called in since the last Cabinet meeting.

CAB.14 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

CAB.15 Leader's Announcements

The Leader informed Members that the move to new HQ was now in the last stages and the Council would be operational from its new site on 1st October 2012. The last meeting in the Civic Centre, Stourport-on-Severn would be Council on Wednesday 26th September 2012.

Once the move had taken place, Members would be able to collect their post from the Members Lounge and they would need to ensure that their swipe cards were collected as no other means of access to the building would be allowed.

Members were advised that the Leader had reconvened a meeting of the Cabinet Review Group on 26th September 2012 where items on the agenda would include business rate relief and how the three towns in the District would be supported with free parking over the Christmas period.

CAB.16 Local Authority Mortgage Scheme (LAMS)

A report was considered from the Director of Resources on the detail in relation to the introduction of the Local Authority Mortgage Scheme (LAMS) as approved by Council on the 29th February 2012, and to consider the recommendations from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 6th September 2012.

The Cabinet Member for Resources and Transformation announced he was pleased that the Council would be entering into the Local Authority Mortgage Scheme (LAMS) with Lloyds TSB Plc and it was hoped that this would assist first time buyers getting on the property ladder. The Treasury Management Review Panel and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee were thanked for their input where the item had received majority support.

Although some Members had had reservations with the Scheme at the outset, following full scrutiny of the subject, they were now pleased that the Council were going ahead with the proposal and felt it would help towards more people in the community owning their own property.

Decision:

1. **The Council enters the LAMS scheme with Lloyds TSB Plc in accordance with the outline provided within the report to Cabinet, and approval be given for the following scheme detail:**
 - **A total indemnity value of £1,000,000;**
 - **A maximum loan size to an individual borrower of £150,000;**
 - **The qualifying post codes would be all postcodes falling within the District boundary.**

2. **The Council's Monitoring Officer to provide an Opinion Letter confirming that the Council has the power to enter into, observe and perform the terms and obligations required of it under the Scheme; and for the Council to indemnify the Monitoring Officer in respect of any personal liability that may be incurred by providing the Opinion Letter. Both the Opinion Letter and the Monitoring Officer's Indemnity Deed would be in the prescribed form as set out in Appendices B and C of the report to Cabinet.**

CAB.17 Budget Monitoring First Quarter 2012/13

A report was considered from the Director of Resources that outlined the monitoring of the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003.

The Cabinet Member for Resources and Transformation advised Members that although there was a small overspend of £74,050 at the end of the first quarter, there were no undue worries as it was only the start of the year and Cabinet would continue to monitor the situation.

Decision: The projected budget variations and comments outlined within the report to Cabinet and appendices 2 to 9 be noted.

CAB.18 Annual Report on Treasury Management Service, Actual Prudential Indicators 2011/12 and Revision to the Investment Policy and Strategy Statement 2012/13

A report was considered from the Director of Resources which recommended to Council the treasury management activities for 2011/12, in line with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code) and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code) and to consider the recommendations from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 6th September 2012.

Members were informed that this had received in-depth scrutiny and had been well received.

Recommended to Council:

- 1. The actual 2011/12 prudential and treasury indicators in the report to Cabinet be approved.**
- 2. The annual treasury management report for 2011/12 be noted.**
- 3. The revision to the Investment Policy and Strategy Statement 2012/13, set out in Appendix 3 of the report to Cabinet be approved and to have immediate effect following Council approval.**

CAB.19 Business Rates - pooling

A report was considered from the Director of Resources which informed Members of the progress towards the decision on whether or not to join the Worcestershire business rates pool.

The Cabinet Member for Resources and Transformation informed Members that the Government intended to change the way how local government were funded for business rates in 2013 and the Cabinet needed to endorse how the Council would move forward. It was felt given the close proximity and the good working relationship with neighbouring authorities, it made sense to work with these authorities rather than join up with the Birmingham & Solihull LEP, although it was noted that Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council would not be involved with the Worcestershire pool.

Members agreed that to stay with the Worcestershire pool.

Decision:

1. **The principle of joining the Worcestershire business rates pool be endorsed.**
2. **Delegated authority be granted to the Cabinet Member for Resources and Transformation, in consultation with the Director of Resources and Chief Executive, to confirm the decision on joining the Worcestershire business rates pool before 19th October 2012.**

CAB.20 Recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 5th July 2012

a. Wyre Forest Affordable Warmth Action Plan.

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee informed Members that the Committee had received a full and informative report and lots of questions had been asked and this had received full support by Members. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee were thanked for their input and it was noted that workshops had taken place and more would be held in Autumn 2012 where advice would be given to members of the public.

The Director of Economic Prosperity and Place would obtain the attendance figures for the sessions that had been held in 2011 and inform Members.

Decision: The Affordable Warmth Action Plan 2012/13, as attached at Appendix 2 of the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5th July 2012, be approved.

b. Wyre Forest Climate Change Action Plan.

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee reported that Members had received a full report which had proved to be a difficult subject to comprehend.

Decision: The Climate Change Action Plan 2012/13, as attached at Appendix 2 of the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5th July 2012, be approved.

CAB.21 Recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 8th August 2012

a. Recommendations from the Housing Review Panel (31st July 2012).

Members were informed that the Housing Review Panel had held 3 meetings which had included meetings with The Community Housing Group and representatives from the Tenants Federation and Tenants Consultative Committees. Full debates had ensued during the meetings which had culminated in the proposed recommendations.

Members were happy to take on board the recommendations and the Panel were thanked for their work to date.

- 1. Community Housing Group to make available a Job Description and Person Specification together with eligibility criteria (as set out at 2 above) to any tenant wishing to consider nomination for election to the Tenant Services Committee.**
- 2. Community Housing group be requested to ensure that there is a uniformed geographic representation of tenants on the Tenant Services Committee from across the Wyre Forest District.**
- 3. A representative from both the Tenants Federation and Central Tenant Forum be involved to oversee the election and appointment process and to act as a scrutiny role throughout the proceedings.**
- 4. Prior to the elections taking place, the Community Housing Group to run 'taster' sessions for any Tenants considering nomination to enable them to gain an understanding of the role and what would be expected of them on the Tenant Services Committee. The sessions could also involve shadowing existing Tenant Board Members if appropriate.**
- 5. Following the election the successful appointees to the Tenant Services Committee to receive training from the Community Housing Group prior to them first taking up their Board role, to enable them to effectively take up their role from September 2013.**

CAB.22 Exclusion of Press and Public

Decision: "Under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of "exempt information" as defined in paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

CAB.23 Leisure Centre Site Acquisition

A report was considered from the Director of Community Well-Being and Environment that asked for Cabinet approval to purchase land for the new Leisure Centre and to consider the recommendations from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 6th September 2012.

Members were informed that the location of the new leisure centre had received a full debate through the Sports and Leisure Centre Review Panel and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and agreed that the chosen site was the most suitable although it had not received majority support. It was noted that accessibility to the site was important and this would form part of the planning application when submitted.

Decision: The land be purchased as a suitable site subject to satisfactory checks on legal title, service enquiries, ground investigations and the grant of outline planning consent and that this site is purchased at a price agreed by Cabinet which has been accepted by the site owners and is within the allocated budget.

CAB.24 Exchange of Land

A report was considered from the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place on land transfers in Bewdley.

Members were taken through the report and agreed that the project would benefit the people of Bewdley and consultations with the public would be carried out.

Decision:

- 1. Subject to 2 to 4 below, the exchange of land outlined in the report and appendices to Cabinet be approved and delegated authority be granted to the Directors of Economic Prosperity & Place and Community Assets & Localism in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Members for Environmental Services and Place Shaping to undertake the necessary work and complete all necessary documentation to facilitate the exchange.**
- 2. Delegated responsibility be granted to the Director of Economic Prosperity & Place to make the necessary arrangements with the other party to undertake public consultation on the proposed land exchange and its consequences and in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Members for Environmental Services and Place Shaping to consider the outcome of such consultation.**
- 3. Delegated responsibility be granted to the Director of Economic Prosperity & Place, Community Well-being & Environment and Community Assets & Localism, in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Members for Environmental Services and Place Shaping, to facilitate any necessary work to ensure that planning permissions are in place as required for the respective development before any land exchange takes place and to procure and implement the demolition of the existing buildings and the construction of a new car park**

4. **Approval be given to the transfer of the land at less than best value at a net projected loss of asset value of £208k, taking into account the foregone capital receipt and to the transitional and ongoing loss of car park income as outlined in the report to Cabinet which will be reflected in the new base budget; and the expenditure of up to the £250k earmark reserve to demolish the existing buildings, to construct the new car park on the site of the buildings including any ancillary public realm improvements associated with the new car park layout, any other disbursements resulting from the exchange of land and the construction of additional car parking spaces elsewhere in the Town.**

The meeting closed at 7.00 pm.

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET
23rd OCTOBER 2012

Wyre Forest Tenancy Strategy

OPEN	
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME:	Improving Health and Well-Being
CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITY:	Improving Community Wellbeing
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor A Hingley
DIRECTOR:	Director of Economic prosperity and Place
CONTACT OFFICER:	Sally Horne Ext 2561 Sally.horne@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
APPENDICES:	Appendix 1 - Tenancy Strategy, Appendix 2 - Consultation Responses

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 Wyre Forest District Council is required by the Localism Act 2011 to publish a tenancy strategy by January 2013. The strategy outlines the District Council's expectations on how social housing stock in the area should be managed in terms of lettings, rents and disposals and also outlines the District Council's policy on use of the private rented sector for the discharge of homeless duty.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to DECIDE that:

- 2.1 The Wyre Forest District Council Tenancy Strategy be adopted.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Localism Act, which was enacted in November 2011, requires all Local Authorities to publish a Tenancy Strategy by January 2013. Registered Providers must take notice of the strategy in the formulation of their tenancy policies (also a requirement of the Localism Act).
- 3.2 The act makes a number of provisions including:
- Providing local authorities and registered providers with the ability to grant fixed term tenancies (also known as flexible tenancies)
 - Providing for greater social mobility so that tenants can move easily
 - The introduction of affordable rents
 - Providing the ability of Local Authorities to discharge their homeless duty into the private rented sector.

- 3.3 The tenancy strategy (appendix 1) has been based upon the Worcestershire tenancy framework. The framework draws upon the common strategies and policies (such as the Worcestershire Housing Strategy, the draft Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy and the Home Choice Plus Allocations Policy) and provides a reasonably consistent approach for landlords working across authority boundaries within Worcestershire whilst recognising that each authority has differences in the issues affecting their local housing markets and therefore differences in the way they want to influence the use of social and private housing to meet the local housing need.
- 3.4 The draft strategy was consulted upon in August 2012. There were 60 responses (appendix 2) and these have been taken into consideration in the final draft of the strategy.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The Wyre Forest District Council Tenancy Strategy addresses 6 key issues:
- The use of fixed term tenancies by registered providers in the district
 - The use of affordable rents by registered providers in the district
 - Ensuring tenants can move appropriately within social housing stock
 - The disposal of social housing stock in the district
 - The use of local lettings plans
 - The use of the private rented sector to meet housing need and discharge the homelessness duty.
- 4.2 The Localism Act gives registered providers the power to utilise fixed term tenancies in order to make best use of their stock. Fixed term tenancies refer to the term of the tenancy that can be granted by a registered provider. The minimum fixed term Registered Provider's can use is 2 years but guidance issued by the Government recommends the minimum be 5 years. Having considered the use of fixed term tenancies it is suggested that the minimum fixed term used by Registered Providers is 5 years and that these types of tenancies are only used for the larger 4+ bed and adapted properties due to a shortage of these in the district. It is intended that the fixed term tenancy generally be used by Registered Providers as a mechanism for review rather than a tool for eviction. For example, if a household is under occupying a property then the Registered Provider would be expected to assist the household in finding alternative accommodation within their stock. Where fixed term tenancies are utilised for adapted properties, the prevailing need for the adaption will override other circumstances. So for example where a household is under occupying a property with adaptations, but the adaptations are still required by a member of that household then the Registered Provider would be expected to renew the tenancy.
- 4.3 Under the Localism Act, Registered Providers have been given the ability to charge affordable rents on their properties. Affordable rents can be set up to 80% of the open market value, in contrast to social rents which are approximately 50% of open market values. The table below shows the difference between the two rent levels:

District	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
Wyre Forest	£22	£71	£148	£275

There is an expectation by the Government that Registered Providers will charge affordable rents to facilitate the development of new stock. All of the providers who secured Homes and Communities grant have been expected to charge an affordable rent on grant funded units and some have also had to convert a number of existing units to cross subsidise development. Therefore, whilst the District Council does not want to stifle new development, units that are converted, need to be affordable. The table below shows that the larger the unit, the more unaffordable, affordable rent becomes for Wyre Forest households:

Authority	% Unable to Afford 80% Market Rent, 1-bed Apartment	% Unable to Afford 80% Market Rent, 2-bed Apartment	% Unable to Afford 80% Market Rent, 3-bed House	% Unable to Afford 80% Market Rent, 4-bed House
Wyre Forest	34%	34%	45%	63%

The Tenancy Strategy states that it expects Registered Providers to give consideration to the affordability of its stock to local people but as a minimum states that they should not let 4+bed houses on affordable rents or family size houses in high value areas on affordable rents. The rent charged should also be below local housing allowance rates. Registered Providers are expected to publish their strategy for determining which units are to be converted to affordable rent and work with tenants that will be affected by affordable rent changes.

- 4.4 The Tenancy Strategy encourages Registered Providers to participate in Tenancy Mobility Schemes as per the Localism Act. The expectation is that whilst it embraces the need for mobility for social housing tenants nationally, any tenancy exchanges must be in line with the Home Choice Plus Allocations Policy which gives precedence to local connection. All Registered Providers are expected to publish the conditions that apply to tenants seeking to move through mutual exchange, but are expected to allow some flexibility with exchanges, especially if the exchange is to allow somebody to downsize from a property that they cannot afford.
- 4.5 The Tenancy Strategy formalises Wyre Forest’s approach to the disposal of social housing stock and local lettings plans. There have been minimal disposals by Registered Providers in the last few years and the tenancy strategy states that it expects disposals to continue to be an exception. There have also been a number of Local Lettings Plans developed and used in Wyre Forest in recent years. The strategy requires Registered Providers to develop the plan in partnership with the District, providing clear evidence to show why a lettings plan is required. Registered Providers must make reference to the plan when advertising properties and also build in a review period to see if the plan has been effective.

- 4.6 One of the key powers that the Localism Act has given local authorities is the ability to discharge its homeless duty into the private rented sector, where it is appropriate to do so. Prior to the Localism Act, authorities could only discharge their duty into the private rented sector if the homeless household agreed to it. Wyre Forest District Council currently uses accommodation in the private rented sector through the rent bond scheme as one of its main homeless prevention tools and it is envisaged that this will continue to be the case. However, in cases where the homeless duty is discharged by using the Private Rented Sector, the Tenancy Strategy states that it will be done in accordance with the code of guidance on suitability of accommodation and the household will also have the right to a review / appeal via the usual process.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications but the absence of the provision with the Tenancy Strategy could increase the costs of providing the homelessness service by the Council.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Wyre Forest District Council is required by the Localism Act 2011 to publish a tenancy strategy by January 2013.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and there are no adverse or discriminatory issues as a result of the Tenancy Strategy.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 The delivery of a Tenancy strategy is a statutory function and therefore non delivery would mean that Wyre Forest District Council would be in breach of its duties under the Localism Act 2011.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The Wyre Forest District Council Tenancy Strategy has been developed in response to the statutory requirement outlined in the Localism Act, which requires all Local Authorities to publish a Tenancy strategy by January 2013. The strategy provides guidance on 6 key issues including the use of fixed term tenancies, affordable rent, ensuring tenants can move appropriately within the stock, disposal of social housing stock, use of local lettings plans and use of the private rented sector to discharge homeless duty

10. CONSULTEES

- 10.1 Members were first consulted upon the draft tenancy strategy at Members briefing on the 19th July 2012 and a report was taken to Overview and Scrutiny on 4th October.
- 10.1 Registered providers have been consulted via a briefing and also invitation to comment on the public consultation which ran from the 30th July to 20th August 2012.

10.3 Members of the public, tenants and other interested stakeholders were consulted via an on line questionnaire hosted on the district council's website between the 30th July and the 20th August 2012 and there were 60 responses received in total. 78% of the total responses were from tenants and housing applicants, 13% from members of the public and 9% from landlords. The responses to the consultation are in appendix 2 of this report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 A plain English guide to the Localism Act.

11.2 Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 Consultation document.

Wyre Forest District Council
Tenancy Strategy Framework & Principles
(DRAFT)

Contents

1. Introduction.....	19
2. Background Policy	20
3. Aims and Scope of the Strategy	21
4. The County of Worcestershire in Context.....	23
5. Profile of Housing Supply and Need in Worcestershire	25
6. Profile of Rents and Affordability in Worcestershire	32
7. Principles for Registered Providers on Tenancy Policy	36
Tenancy Types	36
Affordable Rent	41
Mobility in Social Housing	44
Disposal of Stock	46
Local Lettings Plans	47
8. Social Housing Allocations	48
9. Use of Private Rented Sector Tenancies.....	49
10. Governance	52

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Localism Act received Royal Assent on the 15th November 2011. The Act is designed to shift power and the decision-making process on a range of matters from Whitehall to local councils, communities and individuals. The Act has a number of clauses relevant to housing including local authorities and other social landlords being able to grant fixed term tenancies with limited security of tenure. The Act also contains changes to the allocation of social housing, the law relating to homelessness and the abolition of the housing revenue account subsidy.
- 1.2 The Localism Act also requires local authorities to publish a Tenancy Strategy within 12 months of the enactment of the Act. This strategy must be produced in consultation with social landlords, tenants, and voluntary and community groups.
- 1.3 There is only one local authority within Worcestershire which still owns and manages its own housing stock. Therefore the Tenancy Strategies to be produced in Worcestershire will provide guidance to the Registered Providers (RPs) operating in the county on what the Worcestershire district councils expect them to consider when developing their own tenancy policies.
- 1.4 Building on our strong and established working relationships within the county, this document has been developed collaboratively between the 6 councils in our strategic role and our registered providers and other key stakeholders. The strategy sets out a consistent framework and agreed set of principles across the county; each individual local authority will also provide more detailed guidance setting out their own specific principles according to their local conditions and need.

2. Background Policy

2.1 The Government's key housing policy goal is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live. To achieve this, the Government is seeking to:

- Achieve a wide choice of high quality homes, both affordable and market housing, to address the requirements of the community
- Widen opportunities for home ownership and ensure high quality housing for those who cannot afford market housing, in particular those who are vulnerable or in need
- Improve affordability across the housing market, including by increasing the supply of housing and;
- Create sustainable, inclusive, mixed communities in all areas, both urban and rural.

Definitions of Affordable Housing

2.2 National Planning Policy (June 2011) defines and includes 3 types of affordable housing:

- a) Social housing up until the introduction of affordable rents was the main model provided by Registered Providers and refers to housing that is subject to strict rent controls, which are around 50% of the market rents.
- b) The new affordable rents which is up to a maximum of 80% of market rent.
- c) Intermediate housing, which includes shared ownership.

It also states that affordable housing should:

- Meet the needs of eligible households including availability at a cost low enough for them to afford, determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices.

Agenda Item No.9.1

- Includes provision for the home to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or, if these restrictions are lifted, for the subsidy to be re-cycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

Delivery of New Homes

- 2.3 Alongside the requirements of the Localism Act, the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) has agreed programmes for the delivery of new affordable housing over the next 4 years with Registered Providers and local authorities.
- 2.4 The level of subsidy provided by the HCA for new affordable homes has significantly reduced and the ability for RP's to deliver with the reduced availability of grant has to be made up in the following ways:
 - All new homes built with HCA subsidy are expected to be offered at affordable rents: up to 80% of the market rent.
 - In addition RPs are offering to increase rents on a percentage of re-let properties.
 - They have also been encouraged to take a more pro-active approach to managing their stock, including the disposal of stock where this will bring funds to invest in new homes.

3. Aims and Scope of the Strategy

Aims and Objectives

- To ensure that affordable housing meets local housing need
- To provide guidance and direction to RP partners in the development of their tenancy policies
- To provide a framework for up to date knowledge of the housing market in Worcestershire that can then be used to inform policy and practice

- To indicate to tenants and prospective tenants what they can expect from their tenancy

Scope

3.1 The strategy will provide guidance to RPs in the following areas:

- The kind of tenancies that they grant,
- The circumstances in which different tenancies should be granted
- The length of fixed term tenancies
- The criteria to consider when reviewing tenancies at the end of the fixed term
- How disposals of stock should be managed
- How the Worcestershire district councils will give consideration to new government guidance in relation to allocations of social housing.

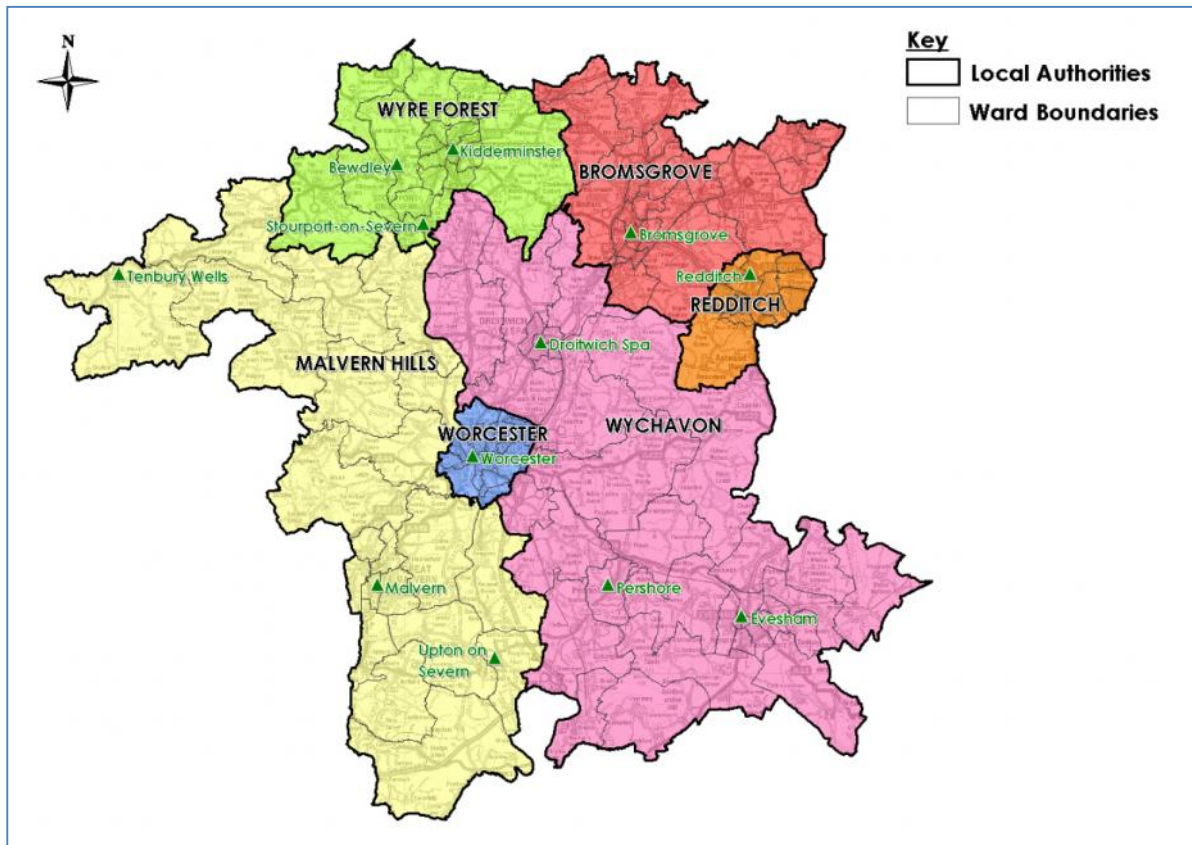
3.2 Although local authorities are not required to include an assessment of affordability in their Tenancy Strategy, the Worcestershire district councils recognise the importance of ensuring that affordable housing continues to be available and accessible to those who need it most and must therefore remain affordable, as defined by locally defined thresholds. The Worcestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment published in 2012 provides a detailed assessment of income and affordability in each district area and this information will be used to determine each district's guidance to RPs in their area.

3.3 The strategy will also set out the local authorities' approach to maximising the use of private rented sector tenancies, particularly in relation to the new power to discharge homelessness through this tenure.

3.4 The strategy has been developed as a result of consultation with a range of partners and stakeholders, including RPs, Social Care, local councillors and voluntary and community organisations. Also key to the development of

the principles underpinning this strategy was an examination of the nature of the housing market across the county of Worcestershire., looking at detailed information around the issues of need, supply and affordability locally.

4. The County of Worcestershire in Context



Source: GVA 2011 (Worcestershire SHMA)

- 4.1 Worcestershire is a large and diverse county, including both urban areas, market towns and rural areas, all of which present different issues in terms of availability, accessibility and affordability of accommodation. The county covers an area of 173,592 hectares with much of this being rural and sparsely populated.

- 4.2 Worcestershire is a two tiered authority area, with a county council and 6 local councils comprising of a district council, a borough council and 4 district councils. The only local authority to have retained its housing stock is Redditch Borough Council; the other 5 local authorities have all

transferred their housing stock to housing associations, but continue to have a strategic housing responsibility.

- 4.3 The population of Worcestershire was estimated to stand at 556,000 in 2009. The County has seen growth of just below 9 per cent in its population since 1991, above average for the West Midlands but on a par with the national growth rate. The Worcestershire SHMA 2012 shows that the population will continue to grow over the next 20 years, with a significant growth in the older people population in particular areas.

Worcestershire Vision

- 4.4 The vision of the Worcestershire Housing Strategy is
 “The right home, at the right time, in the right place”
- 4.5 This means that we want every household in Worcestershire to be able to access housing that suits their needs and circumstances when they need it. It is implicit in the vision that we want all housing to reach an appropriate standard, currently the Decent Homes Standard, and that the right home means one that is affordable to the household’s budget. However, we do not mean that changing household circumstances should always result in the need to move home. Our vision embraces a much wider approach which always involves a housing options assessment to ensure household needs are met.
- 4.6 How our Worcestershire Housing Strategy Goals link to the Tenancy Strategy:

	Worcestershire Housing Strategy Goals	Tenancy Strategy Issues
1	Better use of existing homes	The Tenancy Strategy will set out the local authorities’ approach to using different types of tenancy, enabling mobility and discharging its homelessness duty to maximise the

		use of the existing housing stock in the county, including both social and privately rented homes
2	Deliver new housing	The Tenancy Strategy will set out the local authorities' approach to ensuring that the new affordable rent model can be used to maximise new affordable housing delivery whilst ensuring that homes remain affordable for local people in housing need.
3	Improve the condition of existing homes	The Tenancy Strategy is not the appropriate mechanism to facilitate this.
4	Providing housing related support	The tenancy strategy will set out the local authorities' approach to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring that adequate and timely advice and assistance is given to households whose tenancies are not renewed at the end of the fixed term • maximising the use of adapted properties through the use of fixed term tenancies • linking the review of tenancies with support and tenancy sustainment not homelessness

5. Profile of Housing Supply and Need in Worcestershire

5.1 There are currently just under 250,000 dwellings in Worcestershire. The Census (2001) shows that the largest proportions of dwellings in the County are either detached (37.7%) or semi-detached (36%). Terraced housing only accounts for a significant proportion of the total stock in Redditch and Worcester, in the latter reflecting the urban nature of much of

the city. In Redditch the new town development between 1964 and 1985 also involved a significant amount of terrace style properties which served to increase the proportion of this stock type.

5.2 A full breakdown of the housing stock by type across the County is provided in the table below:

Fig. 1 Housing Stock by Type in Worcestershire

Property Type	Bromsgrove	Malvern Hills	Redditch	Worcester	Wychavon	Wyre Forest
Converted flats	0.6%	2.2%	0.8%	1.5%	0.9%	0.9%
Purpose built flats	4.0%	4.3%	6.5%	7.2%	4.2%	4.7%
Terraced	13.5%	10.6%	29.1%	23.8%	17.0%	18.1%
Semi-detached	39.1%	33.1%	31.8%	39.3%	31.1%	41.5%
Detached	41.4%	48.1%	31.2%	27.0%	45.2%	33.3%
Other	1.5%	1.7%	0.4%	1.0%	1.6%	1.6%

Source: Census, 2001

5.3 The tenure breakdown of the stock in each district is shown in the table below:

Fig. 2 Dwelling Stock by Tenure

District	Total Dwelling Stock	LA Dwelling Stock		RP Dwelling Stock		Other Public Sector Dwelling Stock		Owner Occupied and Private Rented Dwelling Stock	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Bromsgrove	39,080	0	0.0	3,886	9.9	6	0.0	35,190	90.0
Malvern Hills	33,410	0	0.0	4,452	13.3	0	0.0	28,950	86.7
Redditch	35,160	6,079	17.3	1,657	4.7	17	0.0	27,410	78.0
Worcester	42,470	8	0.0	6,738	15.9	17	0.0	35,710	84.1
Wychavon	51,190	18	0.0	7,434	14.5	28	0.1	43,710	85.4
Wyre Forest	43,980	0	0.0	6,382	14.5	35	0.1	37,570	85.4
Worcestershire	245,290	6,105	2.5	30,549	12.5	103	0.0	208,540	85.0

Source: Communities and Local Government, 2011

5.4 In terms of social rented stock the 2001 Census showed that this tenure constituted 15.3% of all households across the County, with this varying between 10.6% in Bromsgrove and 22.7% in Redditch.

5.5 Right to buy activity has continued to reduce this proportion with approximately 31,000 properties being sold from 1994 to 2010. New properties have, however, also added to the social housing stock.

Fig. 3 Social Housing Stock by District and Size

5.6 The social housing stock in the county is split by district and size as follows:

District	1 bed		2 bed		3 bed		4+bed		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Bromsgrove	1,364	36.3	1,055.	28.1	1,290	34.3	47	1.3	3,756	90.
Malvern Hills	1,272	29.7	1,582.	36.9	1,357	31.7	73	1.7	4,284	86.
Redditch	2,873	38.3	2,126.	28.3	2,281	30.4	22	3.0	7,502	78.
Worcester	2,025	31.9	1,810.	28.5	2,356	37.2	14	2.4	6,340	84.
Wychavon	2,081	29.3	2,390.	33.7	2,487	35.0	14	2.0	7,099	85.
Wyre Forest	728	16.1	1,515.	33.6	2,161	47.9	10	2.3	4,508	85.
Worcestershire	10,343	30.9%	10,478	31.3%	11,932	35.6%	736	2.2%	33,489	85.0

Source: Communities and Local Government, 2011

5.7 Nearly a third of social housing stock is made up of one bedroom properties of which the majority are flats. Of the large proportion of one bedroom properties, 45% are either sheltered bedsits or flats. Redditch has a particularly high proportion of one bedroom properties (37.9%), whereas Wyre Forest has by far the lowest (16.3%).

5.8 31% of the social housing stock is made up of two bedroom properties, split between flats (12.6%) and houses and bungalows (18.7%). Three bedroom houses account for over a third of the social housing stock, almost all of which are houses. Nearly half of Wyre Forest’s social housing stock is made up of 3 bedroom properties.

5.9 Four bedroom and larger houses make up just 2.3% of the overall stock. Redditch has the highest proportion of 4+ bedroom properties and Malvern Hills the lowest.

Fig. 4 Social Housing Lettings 2009/10

Lettings (Bedrooms)	Bromsgrove	Malvern Hills	Redditch	Worcester	Wychavon	Wyre Forest
0/1 Bedroom	48%	46%	57%	51%	49%	48%
2 Bedrooms	36%	37%	27%	32%	35%	35%
3 Bedrooms	14%	17%	14%	16%	16%	16%
4+ Bedrooms	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Total Lettings	309	291	574	512	484	526

5.10 In total, there were 2,122 social lettings to households on the waiting list across Worcestershire during 2009/10. The majority of lettings were to smaller 1 and 2 bedroom properties, with only an average of 17% of lettings being to 3 and 4+ bedroom properties.

Housing Need

5.11 There are nearly 24,000 households on waiting lists for social housing in Worcestershire.

5.12 The following tables show a breakdown of these households:

Fig. 5 Households on the Waiting List by Household Type

District	Total Households	Couple	Family	Other	Pensioner	Single
Bromsgrove	3,324	8%	42%	5%	15%	30%
Malvern Hills	2,285	11%	37%	3%	15%	33%
Redditch	3,598	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Worcester	4,501	9%	42%	1%	9%	39%
Wychavon	4,801	10%	35%	3%	16%	36%
Wyre Forest	5,210	9%	38%	0%	22%	31%
Worcestershire	23,719					

Source: Housing Waiting Lists, GVA Analysis 2011

5.13 This data shows that the household type most frequently requiring affordable housing are family households, followed by single person households.

Fig. 6 Households on the Waiting List by Age

Local Authority	18-24	25-34	35-64	65+	Under 18
Bromsgrove	17%	29%	41%	13%	0.0%
Malvern Hills	17%	23%	44%	15%	0.2%
Worcester City	21%	32%	39%	7%	0.4%
Wychavon	19%	28%	41%	12%	0.3%
Wyre Forest	19%	24%	41%	15%	0.4%

Source: Local Authority Waiting Lists

5.14 This data shows that the age group most frequently requiring affordable housing are 35-64 year olds, followed by 25-34 year olds.

Fig. 7 Households on the Waiting List by Household Type

District	Total Households	Owner Occupied	Social Rent	Private Rent	Sharing/Lodging	Other/Not Specified
Bromsgrove	3,324	11%	29%	21%	7%	32%
Malvern Hills	2,285	7%	36%	23%	6%	28%
Redditch	3,598	8%	36%	22%	30%	5%
Worcester	4,501	5%	29%	24%	13%	28%
Wychavon	4,801	7%	23%	16%	6%	48%
Wyre Forest	5,210	12%	26%	22%	6%	33%
Worcestershire	23,719					

5.15 This table illustrates the pressures on households in market tenures, with a relatively high demand from other tenures, in particular the private rented tenure. There are also significant numbers of households on the waiting list who are seeking to transfer from a social housing tenancy.

Fig. 8 Households on the Waiting List in 'Significant Need'

5.16 Households in 'Significant Need' are defined as those households in bandings of Silver and above on the two choice based lettings schemes in Worcestershire; Home Choice and Home Choice Plus.

District	Households in 'Significant Need'	Proportion of Total Waiting List (Authority)	Proportion of Total Number of Households (Authority)
Bromsgrove	499	15.0%	1.3%
Malvern Hills	479	20.9%	1.5%
Redditch	929	25.8%	2.8%
Worcester	1,061	23.5%	2.6%
Wychavon	1,153	24.0%	2.3%
Wyre Forest	986	18.9%	2.3%
Worcestershire	5,107	21.5%	2.1%

Source: Housing Waiting Lists, GVA Analysis 2011

5.17 There are a total of 5,107 households categorised as having a significant level of need for affordable housing, representing approximately 22% of the total number of households on waiting lists across Worcestershire.

5.18 Of those households in significant need, their estimated property size requirements are as follows:

Fig. 9 Estimated Property Size Requirements

District	1 bedroom	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4+ bedrooms
Bromsgrove	45%	33%	14%	7%
Malvern Hills	66%	25%	5%	3%
Redditch	43%	29%	14%	14%
Worcester	52%	34%	9%	4%
Wychavon	44%	37%	14%	4%
Wyre Forest	60%	29%	9%	2%

5.19 There are slight variances in the size of affordable housing required going forward over the next five years within Worcestershire. Overall, however, a relatively consistent trend is evident; there is a predominant requirement for smaller 1 and 2 bedroom dwellings across all authorities within Worcestershire. However, there is still a continued requirement for 3 and 4+ bedroom units in all districts, particularly since these property types do not become available as frequently as smaller units (see fig. 4).

5.20 Taking into account the levels of need and supply of affordable housing in the county, the Worcestershire SHMA published in 2012 has concluded that there is an annual requirement for an additional 1,354 affordable properties in Worcestershire over the next 5 years.

5.21 Figure 10 below shows how this requirement is broken down by district and affordable tenure:

Fig. 10 Annual Affordable Housing Need over next 5 years

	Net Affordable Housing Requirement - by Tenure (Annual - next 5 years)					
	Social Rented			Intermediate		
Authority	Supply	Net Need (Total)	Net Need (%)	Supply	Net Need (Total)	Net Need (%)
Bromsgrove	227	186	85%	26	33	15%
Malvern Hills	220	127	97%	31	4	3%
Redditch	405	100	60%	20	67	40%
Worcester	366	297	83%	15	61	17%
Wychavon	372	221	82%	7	48	18%
Wyre Forest	404	154	73%	8	56	27%
Worcestershire	1,994	1,085	80%	107	269	20%

Profile of Rents and Affordability in Worcestershire

6.1 This section provides information on the rent levels across Worcestershire for market, affordable and social rents and provides an assessment of each tenure's affordability relative to average household income in each district.

6.2 In assessing the affordability of different tenures, the following principles have been applied:

- Housing is considered to be affordable where the rent payable would constitute no more than 25% of a household's gross income
- Rent payable is defined as the entire rent due, even if it is partially or entirely met by housing benefit
- Annual social housing rents are calculated from an average taken of RSL rental levels (RSR dataset)
- A household income of £30,000 is the benchmark for entry into market housing across the authorities
- Income data has been derived from CACI 2010

Fig. 11 Average Monthly Private Rental Levels & Income Required by Property Size

District	1 bedroom Apartment		2 bedroom		3 bedroom House		4 bedroom House		% of All Households Earning Less than £30,000
	Rent	Income Required	Rent	Income Required	Rent	Income Required	Rent	Income Required	
Bromsgrove	£433	£20,784	£578	£27,744	£690	£33,120	£941	£45,168	43%
Malvern Hills	£485	£23,280	£571	£27,408	£660	£31,680	£675	£32,400	51%
Redditch	£453	£21,744	£577	£27,672	£669	£32,112	£1,173	£56,304	50%
Worcester	£493	£23,664	£608	£29,160	£696	£33,408	£987	£47,376	53%
Wychavon	£466	£22,368	£577	£27,672	£730	£35,040	£929	£44,592	48%
Wyre Forest	£400	£19,200	£500	£24,000	£608	£29,184	£795	£38,160	55%

Source: Rightmove.co.uk, 2011

6.3 There is a relatively strong consistency across authorities in terms of rental levels. Worcester records a strong market for smaller properties, in particular 2 bed properties. Wyre Forest consistently records a lower monthly rental level across all property types.

Figure 12 Average Monthly Social Rental Levels & Income Required by Property Size

District	1 bedroom Apartment		2 bedroom		3 bedroom House		4 bedroom House		% of All Households Earning Less than £30,000
	Rent	Income Required	Rent	Income Required	Rent	Income Required	Rent	Income Required	
Bromsgrove	£275	£13,200	£319	£15,312	£346	£16,608	£379	£18,192	43%
Malvern Hills	£306	£14,688	£342	£16,416	£383	£18,384	£431	£20,688	51%
Redditch	£339	£16,272	£339	£16,272	£369	£17,712	£417	£20,016	50%
Worcester	£282	£13,536	£319	£15,312	£332	£15,936	£381	£18,288	53%
Wychavon	£293	£14,064	£337	£16,176	£369	£17,712	£394	£18,912	48%
Wyre Forest	£298	£14,304	£329	£15,792	£338	£16,224	£361	£17,328	55%

Source: RSR 'Guide to Local Rents Part II', 2011

6.4 As would be expected, there is a high level of consistency in rental levels across the authorities.

Figure 13 Average Affordable Rent Levels (80% market rent) & Income Required by Property Size

District	1 bedroom Apartment		2 bedroom		3 bedroom House		4 bedroom House		% of All Households Earning Less than £30,000
	Rent	Income Required	Rent	Income Required	Rent	Income Required	Rent	Income Required	
Bromsgrove	£346	£16,627	£462	£22,195	£552	£26,496	£753	£36,134	43%
Malvern Hills	£388	£18,624	£457	£21,926	£528	£25,344	£540	£25,920	51%
Redditch	£362	£17,395	£461	£22,138	£535	£25,690	£938	£45,043	50%
Worcester	£394	£18,931	£486	£23,328	£557	£26,726	£790	£37,901	53%
Wychavon	£373	£17,894	£461	£22,138	£584	£28,032	£743	£35,674	48%
Wyre Forest	£320	£15,360	£400	£19,200	£486	£23,347	£636	£30,528	55%

Source: GVA, 2011

6.5 Having set out the rent levels for the three rental tenures, the following table shows the difference between the average social and affordable rent levels in each district by property size.

Figure 14 Difference between Monthly Social and Affordable Rent Levels by Property Size

District	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	4 bedroom
Bromsgrove	£71	£143	£206	£374
Malvern Hills	£82	£115	£145	£109
Redditch	£23	£122	£166	£521
Worcester	£112	£167	£225	£409
Wychavon	£80	£124	£215	£349
Wyre Forest	£22	£71	£148	£275

6.6 Figure 14 shows that the introduction of affordable rent as a replacement for social rent would generate significantly higher rental returns for RPs than traditional social rents. Worcester City in particular records the

greatest average differential. This is likely to pose an affordability challenge to many households within lower income bands.

- 6.7 It is therefore essential that an analysis of affordability is considered in terms of access to affordable rent. The following table sets out the proportion of households in each district who would be unable to afford an affordable rent level:

Figure 15 Proportion of Households Unable to Afford Affordable Rent Housing

Authority	% Unable to Afford 80% Market Rent, 1-bed Apartment	% Unable to Afford 80% Market Rent, 2-bed Apartment	% Unable to Afford 80% Market Rent, 3-bed House	% Unable to Afford 80% Market Rent, 4-bed House
Bromsgrove	25%	35%	43%	59%
Malvern Hills	31%	41%	51%	51%
Redditch	30%	41%	50%	77%
Worcester City	33%	43%	53%	68%
Wychavon	29%	39%	48%	64%
Wyre Forest	34%	34%	45%	63%

Source: CACI 2010, GVA Analysis 2011

- 6.8 These figures suggest that the effectiveness of affordable rent as a product to meet housing need will vary considerably across districts and property types and there will still be a need to ensure that the traditional, lower cost tenure of social rent continues to be provided to meet the needs of those households on lower incomes who are unable to afford affordable rent. In providing guidance to RPs on how the local authority would prefer to see the affordable rent model utilised, each district will take into consideration the difference between the rent levels for social and affordable rent, the proportion of households unable to afford affordable rent, the Local Housing Allowance levels in the district, the stock profile and the specific demographics and geography of the district.

7. Principles for Registered Providers on Tenancy Policy

- 7.1 Having considered the nature of the housing supply, demand and need in the county, this section will set out the principles that the Worcestershire district councils expect RPs to have regard to when developing their own tenancy policy:

Tenancy Types

Background Information

- 7.2 The Localism Act enables RPs to let properties to new tenants using fixed term tenancies rather than lifetime assured tenancies. Fixed term tenancies should usually be offered for a minimum of 5 years, unless there is an exceptional reason to reduce the term to 2 years.
- 7.3 Fixed term tenancies can be offered at either social or affordable rent.
- 7.4 RPs are not obliged to offer fixed term tenancies and lifetime tenancies can continue to be offered.
- 7.5 At the end of the fixed term, the RP will have the option to review the tenant's circumstances and the conduct of the tenancy and can either terminate or extend the tenancy. RPs are required to develop and publish a Tenancy Policy and the criteria to be taken into account when deciding whether to extend or terminate a fixed term tenancy should be clearly set out in this policy.
- 7.6 Where a RP chooses to terminate a fixed term tenancy at the end of the period, the RP must give notice of their decision 6 months before the end of the tenancy and must also ensure that the tenant is provided with advice and assistance with finding suitable alternative accommodation.
- 7.7 Existing allocation and nomination arrangements will continue, with properties offered on fixed term tenancies being advertised and let through existing schemes, e.g. choice based lettings schemes.

- 7.8 RPs will continue to be able to offer introductory tenancies.
- 7.9 Existing tenants will retain their security of tenure whether they remain in their current home or not. However, their rent may change if they move to a property which the RP has chosen to let at affordable rent levels.

Worcestershire Principles

- 7.10 The local authorities in Worcestershire welcome the introduction of fixed term tenancies as a means of ensuring that best possible use is made of the limited social housing stock in the county. However, it is essential that the use of fixed term tenancies should not undermine the sustainability of communities and neighbourhoods and care must therefore be taken in determining in what circumstances such tenancies will be offered and what review criteria will be applied at the end of the tenancy.
- 7.11 The Worcestershire district councils consider that where flexible tenures are to be used, they should be offered for a minimum of five years in order to provide stability and security.
- 7.12 It is also expected that unless there has been a significant change in circumstances following a review, the tenancy will be renewed for a further period. The circumstances in which a local authority considers a tenancy may not be renewed will be set out by each district according to their local conditions, but all RPs should ensure that they clearly publish the criteria and conditions they intend to apply to the allocation and review of fixed term tenancies and that this information should be provided to tenants prior to their tenancy commencement. RPs should also make clear whether they intend to terminate fixed term tenancies if any or all of the specified conditions are met and in what circumstances they will renew a tenancy even though some or all of the conditions are met.

Overcrowding and Under-occupation

- 7.13 The Worcestershire Local Housing Authorities encourage landlords to take positive action to facilitate a move to more suitable accommodation where tenants' circumstances change and their current home is too large or indeed where the accommodation is too small.
- 7.14 The proposed housing benefit restrictions on bedroom size being applied from April 2013 for working age households will add further pressure to ensure that properties are not under occupied.
- 7.15 The Home Choice Plus Allocations Policy awards bandings to families who are overcrowded and reasonable preference and priority is given to those applicants who are living in severely overcrowded conditions.
- 7.16 It is important that the best possible use is made of existing housing stock and priority will be given where a Local Authority or Housing Association tenant, in the Home Choice Plus area, applies to move to a smaller, or more appropriate type of property.

Properties with Adaptations

- 7.17 It is important that properties with adaptations are used appropriately due to the limited resources available to meet a growing need for adapted properties. Many of the authorities in Worcestershire have a significant number of older people living in their locality and this figure is projected to increase. It is therefore important to ensure that if the circumstances or needs of a tenant with an adapted property change, meaning that they no longer require a property with an adaptation then the tenant will be moved to a more suitable property. The adapted property should then be allocated to someone requiring such an adaptation.
- 7.18 The Home Choice Plus Allocation Policy awards priority to households occupying an adapted property and wishing to move to a more suitable property.

Wyre Forest District Council Principles

7.19 Wyre Forest District Council expects RPs to consider the following factors in determining the criteria to be used for allocating and reviewing fixed term tenancies:

- Due to the shortage of larger family housing in the district, the district council supports the use of fixed term tenancies for 4+ bedroom properties in order to ensure that this scarce resource can be used most effectively.
- In order to ensure the best possible use of stock, the district council supports the use of fixed terms tenancies for properties with specialist adaptations. Where there is still a requirement for adaptations, this requirement should over ride other considerations such as household income.
- The district council considers that all fixed term tenancies should be renewed unless the household's circumstances have changed to such an extent that the property is no longer suitable for their needs or has improved to the extent that they are able to meet their needs through market tenure housing. Examples of this include:
 - The adaptations in the property are no longer required
 - The household income or savings exceeds the thresholds specified by the Home Choice Plus allocations policy. This currently stands at income of over £60,000 per annum and/or savings/assets/equity exceeding £50,000 (unless their needs can only be met through housing that is not available as a market tenure)
 - The household is under-occupying their property, particularly in the case of family housing. Under-occupation should be defined by the bedroom standard specified in the Home Choice Plus allocations policy.
 - There have been repeated serious breaches of the tenancy conditions set out at the commencement of the tenancy and appropriate

Agenda Item No.9.1

support has been offered to the tenant to address these breaches, but there has been a consistent failure on the part of the tenant to do so. In the case of rent arrears, the RP should take into account where arrears have accrued as a result of the introduction of the new working age bedroom size limit to housing benefit. In these circumstances, the district council expects RPs to be flexible in its approach and to assist tenants to find more affordable accommodation within its own stock.

- Where a tenancy is not renewed at the end of a fixed term, the RP should ensure that adequate and appropriate advice and assistance is provided to the tenant to enable them to secure alternative accommodation. This may include assisting them to move within the RP's own stock (either rented or shared ownership) or moving into a market tenure. The tenant should be given a notice period of at least 6 months and the RP should also notify Wyre Forest District Council's Strategic Housing Team of any intended tenancy terminations as soon as notice is given.
- The district council expects that very few, if any, homeless approaches should be generated by an RP terminating a fixed term tenancy, as appropriate advice should have been provided to the tenant to enable them to meet their own needs, but where a former tenant does approach the district council for homeless assistance, the RP should assist the council with its enquiries where requested.
- In most cases (unless the property conditions would make it unsuitable), the district council expects that RPs should allow the tenant to remain in their property at the end of a tenancy until a suitable alternative has been found.
- RPs should ensure that tenants are provided with clear and adequate information about the reasons why their tenancy has been terminated,

and clear guidance should be provided on the way in which they can appeal any tenancy termination decision.

- Where a household is found to be significantly over-crowded at the time of a fixed term tenancy review and the household does not meet any of the other criteria for tenancy termination, the district council expects that the RP should assist the household to find suitable alternative accommodation within its own stock. The district council considers overcrowding to be defined by the bedroom standard specified in the Home Choice Plus allocations policy.

Affordable Rent

Background Information

- 7.20 The new tenure of affordable rent was introduced in 2010 following the Comprehensive Spending Review and enables RPs who have entered into a contract with the Homes and Communities Agency to charge rents of up to 80% of market rent levels on all new build properties funded through the 2011-15 HCA programme. These RPs may also convert a proportion of their existing properties to affordable rent.
- 7.21 RPs not in receipt of HCA development funding must continue to let properties at social rent levels. RPs in receipt of funding will also be able to continue charging social rent on existing properties if they choose to.
- 7.22 Existing tenants remaining in the same home will not be affected by this change. However, they may be affected if they transfer to a new home.
- 7.23 Tenants who are offered properties at affordable rent levels will continue to be eligible for Housing Benefit.
- 7.24 Existing allocation and nomination arrangements will continue, with properties offered at affordable rent being advertised and let through existing schemes, e.g. choice based lettings schemes.

Worcestershire Principles

7.25 The Worcestershire district councils expect RPs to take into consideration the affordability calculations included in the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (tables included in section 4 of this document) and the specific demographics of its operating area in determining the rent levels to set and the proportion of its existing stock that it will convert to affordable rent. RPs should also take into account the availability of affordable and market accommodation in specific areas and the need to ensure sustainable communities in determining rent levels – e.g. some rural areas may have very limited affordable housing stock and introducing affordable rent in these areas may make the stock unaffordable to the majority of local people. Each local authority will specify its preferences for areas for areas which should be excluded from the affordable rent model.

Wyre Forest District Council Principles

7.26 It is recognised that affordable rent will meet the needs of some of those in housing need in the district. However, it is more likely that this product will assist the wider housing waiting list as opposed to those in significant need, who are likely to have fewer resources available to them. This is because although households in properties charged at affordable rent levels will be eligible for housing benefit, those households on a low income and not in receipt of housing benefit may struggle to afford these rent levels. The government is keen that benefit dependence and worklessness levels should be reduced and it is therefore also vital that rent levels should not act as a barrier or disincentive to entering employment. In addition, when Universal Credit is introduced, there will be caps on the levels of benefit that a household will be entitled to and housing benefit will be included in this. This again may mean that households will struggle to afford the affordable rent levels; in Wyre Forest, this is particularly true of larger family sized accommodation (3 and 4+ bedroom properties).

Agenda Item No.9.1

- 7.27 Although Wyre Forest District Council must consider the whole housing market and ensure the needs of all households are provided for, the conversion of social rent properties to affordable rent which are then let to households not in significant need will not serve to reduce the affordable housing requirement for the district; in fact it will increase it.
- 7.28 The SHMA affordability calculations reproduced in section 4 of this document demonstrates that 55% of households in Wyre Forest would struggle to afford 4+ bed houses at an affordable rent.
- 7.29 The district council therefore expects RPs to carefully consider the affordability of its stock for local people when determining which properties should be converted to affordable rent and, as a minimum, expects that RPs should not let 4+ bedroom properties or family sized properties in high value areas at affordable rent.
- 7.30 The district council expects that RPs should publish its criteria for determining which of its existing stock it intends to let at affordable rent levels and should also publish the valuation information it uses to determine the affordable rent level.
- 7.31 The district council expects that in all cases the affordable rent level should be lower than the local housing allowance level for the district.
- 7.32 The district council expects that RPs will provide its tenants who are likely to be affected by changes to welfare benefits with appropriate advice regarding how it will impact them and how they can address any resulting affordability issues.
- 7.33 The district council expects that all affordable rent properties should be advertised through the Home Choice Plus choice based lettings scheme and that the rent level should be clearly indicated on the advert. The RP

should also ensure at the allocation stage that the tenant understands the difference in the rent level and that it is affordable to them.

Section 106 developments

- 7.34 Due to the issues with affordability in the district, the district council considers that there is still a significant requirement for the delivery of new build properties at social rent. The Worcestershire SHMA has identified that in order to meet the backlog and emerging housing need in the district, new development should deliver 70% social and 30% intermediate housing. The district council will therefore continue to seek social rented housing on sites where affordable housing is secured through a Section 106 agreement.
- 7.35 The district council also expects that all properties subject to existing Section 106 agreements should continue to be offered at social rent levels and not be converted to affordable rent. The district council will monitor allocations of properties subject to a Section 106 agreement to ensure that they are offered at the correct rent levels.

Mobility in Social Housing

Background Information

- 7.36 The Localism Act promotes mobility in social housing. The Secretary of State and the regulator has been given the powers to give directions making it easier for tenants to change homes should their circumstances change. All RPs are obliged to participate in a mutual exchange scheme to allow tenants to move more easily.

Worcestershire Principles

- 7.37 Worcestershire recognises the need for tenants to be able to move to be closer to work, family support within the partnership boundaries etc. and supports the Government's efforts to facilitate easier movement within the sector.

- 7.38 Applicants are able to apply to Home Choice Plus from anywhere within the United Kingdom. However, in order to ensure that Home Choice Plus meets the needs of the local community, reduced priority will be given to those applicants without a Local Connection to the relevant Local Authority.
- 7.39 Local connection will be assessed having regard to the definition of local connection contained in Section 199 Housing Act 1996.
- 7.40 The following factors as set out in s199 Housing Act 1996 will be taken into consideration in determining whether or not an applicant has a local connection with the Local Authority area. An application is awarded a local connection if an applicant or a member of their household included in their application:
- has lived in the relevant Local Authority area by choice for a certain time (usually for six months out of the last 12 months or for three years out of the last five years);
 - has close family living in the relevant Local Authority area, who have been permanently resident for at least the previous five years;
 - has permanent employment in the relevant Local Authority area
 - has special circumstances that give rise to a local connection
- 7.41 In determining permanent employment the policy gives consideration to the Local Government Association guidelines which state that this is employment other than that of a casual nature.
- 7.42 For the purposes of determining Local Connection, living in the Local Authority area will not include the following:
- Occupation of a mobile home, caravan or motor caravan where it is not their only or principal home
 - Occupation of a holiday letting (which includes a permanent building, hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation) for the purposes of a holiday.
 - Resident of a HMP, Bail Hostel or other such accommodation.
 - In-Patient of Hospitals/specialist centres

Wyre Forest District Council Principles

- 7.43 The district council expects that all RPs operating in the district should participate in a national mutual exchange scheme to enable tenants to move more easily, e.g. Homeswapper. In order to encourage and facilitate mobility, the district council also expects that existing social tenants should be allowed to retain their security when they move to a new property.
- 7.44 The district council expects that RPs should publish a mutual exchange policy, setting out any conditions it may apply to tenants who wish to exchange.
- 7.45 The district council expects RPs to offer flexibility in allowing exchanges and to clearly explain how tenants' exchange rights will be affected by different tenancy types, including fixed term and introductory tenancies. The district council also expects RPs to offer flexibility to tenants who need to move because they are under-occupying their current home and have faced a reduction in Housing Benefit as a result. This may mean relaxing conditions around the ability to exchange with rent arrears, if this will resolve the household's affordability issues and prevent further arrears from accruing.

Disposal of Stock

Worcestershire Principles

- 7.46 The Worcestershire Local Housing Authorities do not wish to see the disposal of housing stock. However, it is recognised that in certain circumstances this may be justifiable providing it allows for future investment within the individual local authority area in providing more appropriate housing. Agreement would have to be gained from the local authority for any disposal of stock in accordance with legislative requirements and stock transfer agreements. This would include any payment in respect of the disposals claw back agreement.

Wyre Forest District Principles

7.47 The district council expects that RPs should have a disposal strategy which clearly sets out their approach to the disposal of stock and how this benefit the organisation and the local authority area(s) in which is operates. The district council also expects that all disposal decisions should be taken at RP Board level. If RPs wish to dispose of stock within the district, the district council will require them to provide the following information to the Strategic Housing Service with any request for support for disposal:

- Address of property
- Type and size of property
- Whether the property if currently tenanted and if so, how the current tenant will be assisted to find suitable alternative accommodation
- The projected income from the disposal
- How and where this income will be used

Local Lettings Plans

Worcestershire Principles

7.48 Local Lettings Plans are currently used across the county in order to facilitate community sustainability and good housing management. Local Lettings Plans may be used by RPs in some areas to set out how and why particular properties will be let at affordable rent levels or offered on a fixed term basis.

7.49 Local Lettings Plans should always be developed in partnership with the local housing authority.

Wyre Forest District Council Principles

7.50 The district has developed a local lettings plan template and it expects that all plans use this template as a basis.

7.51 All local lettings plans should be need based and have clear and robust evidence to support this need. The plan should clearly set out what the RP is aiming to achieve in applying restrictions on allocations and how these restrictions will assist to meet these objectives. The plan should also have

a set review date, at which time, the RP should assess whether the objectives have been achieved and whether the plan should be extended or amended.

- 7.52 All local lettings plans should be published by the RP and should also be agreed by the district council before use. The district council will publish all local lettings plans on the Home Choice Plus website and any advert which restricts allocations based on a local lettings plans should clearly reference the title of the plan in order that customers are able to make informed choices about their bidding. No property that restricts allocations without a local lettings plan having been agreed will be advertised on the Home Choice Plus website.

8. Social Housing Allocations

- 8.1 All the Worcestershire district councils operate choice based lettings (CBL) schemes to determine how priority should be awarded in the allocation of social housing. Redditch Borough Council operates its own CBL scheme called Home Choice, while the 5 remaining Worcestershire district councils (along with Stratford on Avon District Council) operate a sub-regional CBL scheme called Home Choice Plus.
- 8.2 The Government is currently consulting on new draft statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England. This new guidance is intended to assist authorities to take advantage of the provisions in the Localism Act 2011 by:
- Giving local authorities the freedom to manage their own waiting lists, including allowing them to restrict access to waiting lists
 - Making it easier for existing social tenants to move to more suitable accommodation
 - Encouraging local authorities to make use of the existing flexibilities within the allocation legislation to ensure that social homes go to people who need and deserve them the most, e.g. introducing priority for

economically active households and those who contribute to their local community

- Ensuring that former Service men and women who have urgent housing needs are given 'additional preference' (i.e. high priority) for social housing

8.3 The 5 Worcestershire district council partners of the Home Choice Plus scheme have recently completed a review of the housing allocations policy, which has already taken advantage of flexibilities in terms of restricting priority. However, once the government guidance has been published, a further review will be undertaken to consider what further changes, if any, are needed. Redditch Borough Council's Home Choice scheme will also be reviewed in line with the new government guidance.

9. Use of Private Rented Sector Tenancies

9.1 Local Authorities will be able to discharge their duty to homeless households with an offer of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector provided the tenancy is for a minimum of one year and is suitable for the household. The government will be developing new guidance on assessing suitability to accompany this new power.

Worcestershire Principles

9.2 The private rented sector in the county is complex and differs in availability and affordability between the districts. Market research undertaken as part of the Worcestershire SHMA 2012 highlighted a countywide trend of a lettings market restricted by the lack of available property due to both the withdrawal of the buy to let investor from the market and the growing trend for people to remain within their rental property for increasing amounts of time. In particular agents have noted a lack of 2/3 bed houses, which linked to affordability issues and the nature of the households seeking property are the most popular property type.

9.3 This market research further identified the following district specific trends:

Wyre Forest District Council

9.4 In Wyre Forest there is a high demand for rental properties in Kidderminster in particular but overall rental transactions are relatively low, although demand is considered likely to pick up as a result of pressures not only from would be first time buyers in the authority but those looking to settle in the area and commute to the larger urban areas.

Malvern Hills

9.5 In Malvern Hills the rental market in the area was coming under increasing pressure not only from first time buyers priced out of the market in the authority but also from an increasing number of households relocating into the authority. Rental demand for houses is particular strong and is likely to reflect a desire for couples and families to settle in the area but who are waiting until prices re-align themselves and for the sale market to provide greater choice. There is a need throughout the district for more rental properties as demand continues to outstrip supply.

Bromsgrove

9.6 Within Bromsgrove the lettings market remains buoyant with 3 bedroom houses with gardens being in particular demand. Flats are less popular and there is a high turnover rate associated with this property type. There is high demand throughout Bromsgrove and areas close to transport hubs are always popular.

Wychavon

9.7 The market in Wychavon should be considered in terms of the individual settlements, given the geographical distance between them and the different market links with adjacent areas. The lettings market has slowed down in Droitwich over the last 12 months but rents have remained stable. In Evesham, the supply of rental properties has started to grow as a result of investors purchasing competitively priced properties. Within Pershore the lettings market is performing well, with all property types in demand.

Worcester City

- 9.8 Within Worcester the University of Worcester has changed the private rental market in recent years with increased demand from buy to let landlords which seek to cater for the student market. Overall across Worcester the lettings market is performing well with increasing demand. The absence of available supply was noted as being further compounded by the declining numbers of forced landlords who are beginning to move their property on to the sales market. The market remains very price sensitive and rental levels are a determining factor in whether a property is let.
- 9.9 All the Worcestershire district councils offer some form of private rental sector (PRS) access scheme to facilitate households to enter this tenure and reduce the demand on social housing. There are also various schemes offered by partner and voluntary agencies across Worcestershire, providing PRS access services to specific client groups such as single homeless people and ex-offenders. The district councils are all planning to extend their PRS access schemes in the future and see this sector as offering a suitable alternative tenure for those households who would traditionally have entered social housing. The use of the private rented sector will, however, be determined by the local market.

Wyre Forest District Council Principles

- 9.10 Wyre Forest District Council operates a rent bond scheme, works with MLAS to deliver landlord accreditation and works with partners such as St Basils and Whabac to access the private rented sector through their rent bond and local lettings agency schemes.
- 9.11 The Authority regulates the licensing of 3 storey Houses in Multiple Occupation and licenses are granted to properties achieving the required standards.
- 9.12 The current rent bond scheme operated by the district council is to assist all households who approach as homeless either as a prevention or as a possible discharge of the homeless duty.

- 9.13 If the private rented sector is used for discharging the homeless duty, the district council will always undertake a rigorous assessment of the suitability of this option, including an assessment of affordability, and whether the private rented sector represents an appropriate solution to a household's housing need. Any decision to discharge duty in this way will be subject to the usual homeless appeal process. The use of this power will be closely monitored to ensure that private rented sector tenancies can be sustained over a medium to long term and do not result in repeat homelessness.
- 9.14 All properties accessed through the district councils rent bond scheme must be in good repair, warm, secure and free from category one health and safety hazards. The rent charged should also be at or below local housing allowance levels for the district. Where rent charged exceeds local housing allowance, the district council must be satisfied that the property is affordable for the tenant and that any top up is reasonable.

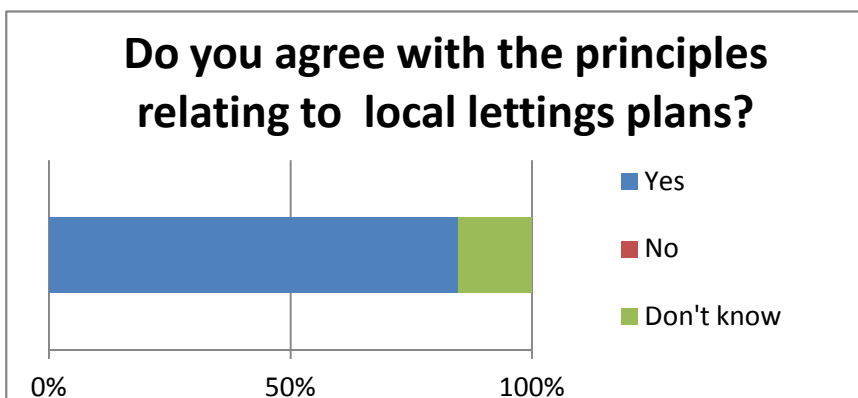
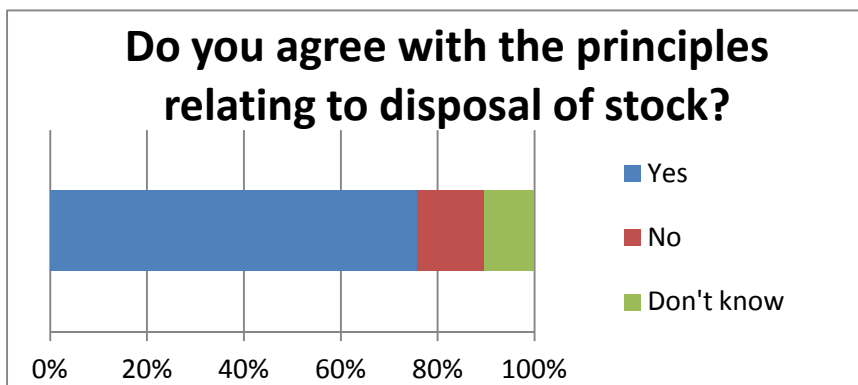
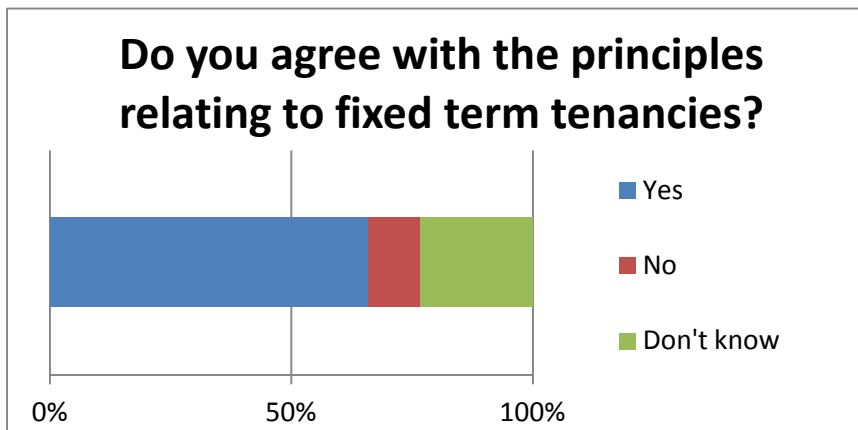
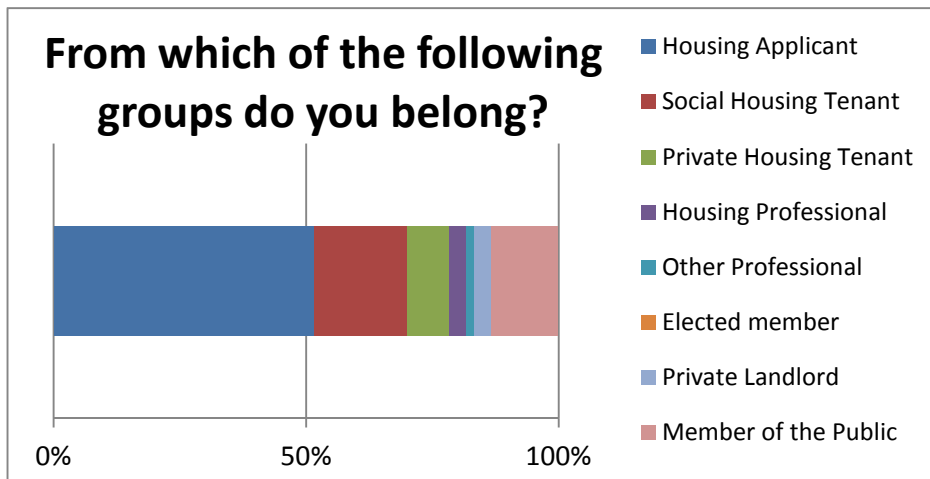
10. Governance

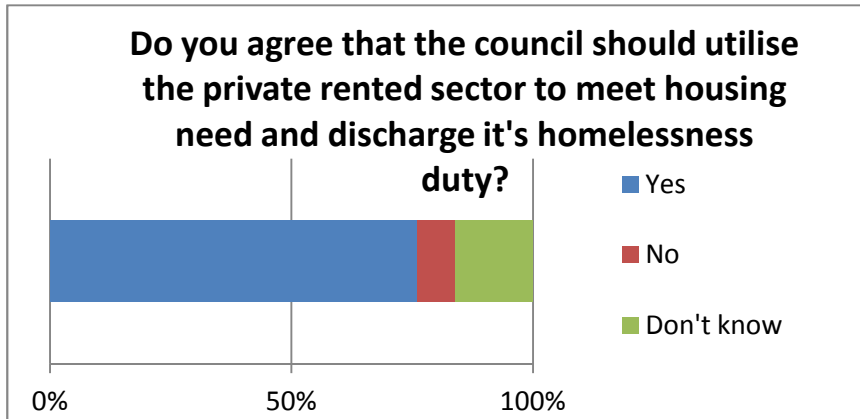
- 10.1 The Worcestershire Strategic Tenancy Framework and principles will be reviewed annually by the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Managers Group to ensure that it remains consistent with the sub regional allocations policy and the Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy.
- 10.2 The individual RP's are responsible for their individual tenancy policies which will be published to provide transparency, enabling local communities to understand clearly how social landlords are responding to local needs and priorities.

11. Consultation

- 11.1 This draft strategy will be subject to a consultation period running from 31st May 2012 to Friday 7th July 2012. Relevant partners, stakeholders and housing applicants will be included in this consultation process and their feedback will be used to develop the final strategy.

Appendix Two: Consultation Responses to Tenancy Strategy Consultation August 2012





Comments

Use of Fixed Term Tenancies	
Comment	Response from WFDC
<p>If I had have took a 5 year tenancy, I would not even painted the walls I would have treated the house like xxxx not looked after it, nothing. Under my long term tenancy, I have rebuilt the kitchen bathroom done major updates and made the house a model house. All your doing is breaking up the family home as you could never settle. I will not except a short term tenancy. All you have done is stopped people making a family home and a stable family for the future children so who ever thought this one through has gone against Government policy on families, shame on you all.</p>	<p>It is expected that assured tenancies will continue to be offered on the majority of social rented properties within Wyre Forest. However, fixed term tenancies will be considered appropriate for 4+ bed houses and adapted properties as these are in short supply in Wyre Forest and we need to make best use of existing stock.</p>
<p>Should not be fixed term.</p>	<p>Noted. Please see comment above.</p>
<p>Stop letting people how get pregnant just to get a home jump the queue. It should be first come first served.</p>	<p>Social housing is allocated on housing need. Those who are assessed as having the greatest need against the Home Choice Plus allocations policy will be given priority for rehousing.</p>
<p>Stricter on asking people to leave. When individuals no longer have a priority need and a requirement for social housing. Financial requirements are too generous. Dependant on family composition aggregate family income should not exceed £30,000.</p>	<p>Noted. However, the agreed income restriction for people to be eligible for housing under the Home Choice Plus Allocations Policy is £60,000 and this is set in line with Government guidance.</p>

<p>There needs to be protection build in for the old and vulnerable tenants.</p>	<p>Noted. The strategy states that it expects Registered Providers to undertake a full review with all tenants towards the end of a fixed term and if the accommodation is no longer suitable, provide suitable alternative accommodation.</p>
<p>Affordable Rent</p>	
<p>Comment</p>	<p>WFDC Response</p>
<p>Affordable rent this should always be a minimum charge so people in hard times can setup a family home for the future generation and should not look at it is a money making scheme.</p>	<p>Affordable rent is only being supported in schemes where it is required to make new developments financially viable for registered providers. The district council resists the widespread conversion of social rented stock to affordable rent due to affordability issues.</p>
<p>Mobility in Social Housing</p>	
<p>Comment</p>	<p>WFDC Response</p>
<p>Provided the tenant does not have a need for a 2nd Bedroom due to disability and having a Carer 24/7.</p>	<p>Noted. This will be reviewed as part of the Home Choice Plus Allocations review.</p>
<p>This is not for the reason you are giving. Again the people in charge have no idea. Let me explain. My mum and dad had 3 kids, we have all gone I said to them think about down sizing the answer all is looking for the problem with that they said is that I'm to old people who move house at a old age don't last long, the trauma of moving kills them around 6 months after. These people that you are targeting have spent years setting up a family home. Its their life, their dreams the big house is them you are asking them to give it all up for a 2 bedroom house with no garden and a attitude of I don't give a xxxx. This is not the answer to housing problems in this country by trying to make people live in smaller houses and in a house they don't want to live in. You are trying to take way their life, my father's answer to moving he said the only way I will leave this house is feet first</p>	<p>Pensioners will have their housing benefit protected and if they are in an assured property will not be required to move. The only households who will be affected are those who take on a fixed term tenancy and registered providers are expected to fully explain the terms of the tenancy to the household at the time of letting. The district council will continue to encourage registered providers to assist households who wish to downsize as we need to make best use of the stock.</p>

Disposal of Stock	
Comment	WFDC Response
Make the spare housing available to people of a low income!	Social Housing is available in the district for those in housing need including people suffering financial hardship. There are minimal disposals by Registered Providers. There have been 2 houses disposed of by registered providers in the last 2 years and the reason for these were the Registered Provider did not have any other stock in the area and both properties were not financially viable for them to repair. Money raised from disposals will fund new housing stock.
Selling houses to rebuild new slums that what it is. I want a house with a big garden not a flat in a slum this is what you are offering really you should call it " Disposal of our future children's life" ask your self would you want to live in a house with 4 paving slaps for your children to play on or a flat if you do you need to take a look in the mirror some time	New build housing meets standards that are generally above those built for private sale. New developments include a range of types and tenures in order to meet housing need.
Local Lettings Plan	
Comment	WFDC Response
Seems a good idea	Noted.
Social Housing Allocations – Issues for the Home Choice Plus Allocations Policy Review	
Comment	WFDC Response
Giving the authorities more freedom is a good idea and to investigate for more needs and those who contribute to their community yes good idea as long as steps are put in place to stop abuse of the system	Noted. This will be reviewed as part of the Home Choice Plus Allocations review.
Help people who have a job, but due to loans etc struggle to find a private rental property!	A housing options service is available to all those people who present with a housing need at the Hub.

I am looking for a New home	Unfortunately, you have not left any contact details. Please go to the hub and ask to speak to somebody about your housing situation.
If a property is free why let a current tenant move? let a person on the waiting list have the property	There are current tenants who are in housing need for a number of reasons, for example overcrowding and may need to move too. There is also a clause within the contract that was written at the time of the transfer of housing from the Council to Community that states 25% of lettings will be made available for transfer (existing tenants).
Social Housing priority must be given to ex service men and women and those who are economically active it should depend on their level of income and savings plus other assets.	Noted. This will be reviewed as part of the Home Choice Plus Allocations review.
Yes I agree with the above factors and if you work this shouldn't go against you.	Noted. Working does not preclude somebody from being a social housing tenant.

Use of the Private Rented Sector

Comment	WFDC Response
Yes and No as soon as the local Authority pays rents to the Private sector it appears landlords charge what ever they like since there is not Rent Control	Agreed but properties that are within the local housing allowance rates will only be used for the discharge of homeless duties.
Yes and No as soon as the local Authority pays rents to the Private sector it appears landlords charge what ever they like since there is not Rent Control	We will only discharge our homeless duty into housing which meets the standards set out in the suitability of accommodation order 2012.
It's all to easy to pass the buck this way. Private rents are too high as it is and will only push the price up to greed people. This is not the answer as private homes are not up to standard or have the freedom to develop a family home for the future children. The future children is what it's all about what we can give them as parents without proper homes then you just breed poor stock and that applies to all thing like animals to people.	Noted, but properties that are within the local housing allowance rates will only be used for the discharge of homeless duties. We will only discharge our homeless duty into housing which meets the standards set out in the suitability of accommodation order 2012.
The private sector should be used more because of the current lack of houses belonging to the housing association. It should also be made easier for people to find accommodation privately.	WFDC is increasing its work with the private rented sector and is increasing its assistance to people who need accommodation and wish to access the private rented sector.

Why can't both be used to help!	It is.
General Comments	
Comment	WFDC Response
<p>I would like to know how many 2, 3 and 4 bedroom houses WFCH has stock of and whether when let they go to existing tenants or out of area tenants. We have been cramped in a 2 bed house with 4 kids in past. My oldest son had mental health problems due to overcrowding which made him leave home at 17 and we had to help him with rent. We now have a 13 yr old, 7 yr old and 3 yr old in one room with no way out as every house is 2 bedded on the website and all the tenants of 3 bedded houses on mutual exchange want another 3 bedded house so we are stuck. And I am tired that it seems new lets in Stourport are to people who have never lived here.</p>	<p>There are 1448, 2 bed properties; 2012, 3 bed properties and 93, 4 bed properties in a total stock of 6711 properties owned by Housing Associations in Wyre Forest. Last year there were 515 lettings and only 4, 4 bed properties became available for letting last year. In the same period, 88, 3 bed properties; 185, 2 bed properties and 232, 1 bed properties became available for letting. Of the 515, lettings, 397 properties were let to people on the waiting list and 118 were let to existing tenants. Of the 515 lettings, only 6 were let to people from outside of the District.</p>
<p>Priority should be given to people who work (that are able) and whose family have a strong connection to the area. A council house should not be seen as a "house for life", and you should have more powers in changing someone's housing when their needs change.</p>	<p>Noted. This will be reviewed as part of the Home Choice Plus Allocations review.</p>
<p>The data that you collect will be miss leading in away that it will be applied and massaged to make money and not for quality of live</p>	<p>We have taken your comments into account through this consultation and will also utilise them in the review of the home choice allocations policy.</p>
<p>Get rid of the 5 year agreements it will stop a family home and will cause hurt for the retired if you want to save money why pay workmen to do the worst ever repairs on the properties. A DIY person could do better. I suggest this to help B&Q do some leaflets that explain how to repair or build things in your home this would help many of the workmen that come out to fix things as for me. I just wait till they have gone reuse the bits they come out with and re work there work so its right sack them all and give us the money for repairs we could get a better job done</p>	<p>Fixed terms will only be used on adapted stock and 4+ bed houses. The terms of the fixed term tenancy will be fully explained to new tenants and when the tenancy is reviewed it is expected that if the household has to move, they will be assisted into another property within the Housing Associations stock. If the need still exists, it is expected that the tenancy will be renewed. With regards to the repairs, we suggest that you contact your landlord.</p>

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Cabinet
23rd October 2012**

**Recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
4th October 2012**

Wyre Forest District Council Tenancy Strategy

The Committee had considered a report from the Principal Strategic Housing Officer which outlined the District Council's expectations on how social housing stock in the area should be managed in terms of lettings, rents and disposals and also outlines the District Council's policy on use of the private rented sector for the discharge of homeless duty.

Recommend to Cabinet:

The Tenancy Statement be approved.

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Cabinet
23rd October 2012**

**Recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
4th October 2012**

Housing Review Panel

The Committee had considered the recommendations from the Housing Review Panel regarding the Disabled Facility Grant (DFG's). The Panel had received updates and advice from Worcestershire County Council and occupational therapists which had helped them with preparing their recommendations.

Recommend to Cabinet:

- 1. That provision is made in the budget for the 2013/14 financial year and beyond to continue to provide a financial top up above the current minimum government grant of £444k to support DFG provision in order to meet the needs of the Wyre Forest District residents.**
- 2. That Cabinet aims to continue to provide the current level of top up funding from 2013/14 , thus enabling an overall fund of £800k to be maintained or if possible exceeded the support for the funding of DFG's.**
- 3. That a 2 tier element be introduced into the budget allocation to ensure that a proportion of the DFG budget be set aside exclusively for Category 3 needs cases.**
- 4. That Cabinet explores alternative funding mechanisms to support the top up, including, but not limited to:**
 - Prudential Borrowing.**
 - A first priority for Right to Buy monies.**
 - Any unallocated funding from the Regional Housing Pot.**
 - Any alternative sources of funding available to the Council, e.g. New Homes Bonus.**
 - External Partnership funding from social care partners, e.g. County Council and the NHS.**
- 5. That Cabinet agree the provision of an alternative adaptation grant/loan mechanism that can be achieved as quickly as possible for simple cases of level access showers and/or stairlifts for example and that such an alternative is used to incentivise self funding or alternative funding sources. Such Adaptation assistance to be developed with partner**

agencies to minimise processes and the number of steps necessary under the full DFG system and to be used as an alternative but not replacement for DFG's.

- 6. That any necessary amendments to the Housing Assistance Policy be made in support of any of the above alternative funding options.**
- 7. That a review of the process of dealing with DFG's be undertaken on a Systems Thinking basis.**
- 8. The Cabinet provides funding or supports funding from external sources for the post of an Occupational Therapist additional to the current District provision, subject to investigation and confirmation of likely costs and benefits.**

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Cabinet
23rd October 2012**

**Recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
4th October 2012**

Revised Statement of Community Involvement – Consultation Draft

The Committee had considered a report from the Senior Forward Planning Officer which asked for Members approval to undertake a six week consultation on the Draft Revised Statement of Community Involvement.

Recommend to Cabinet:

That subject to any additional amendments/comments that the Local Development Framework Review Panel may make, the Draft Statement of Community Involvement as set out at Appendix 1 of the report to Overview & Scrutiny Committee be approved for a six week consultation.