Local Lettings Policy - Avondale Drive Castlefields Shrewsbury

Introduction

The Homelessness Act 2002 enabled housing authorities to introduce flexibility into lettings policies. LLP’s were introduced as a mechanism to implement flexibility enabling properties to be allocated to people of a particular description.

Regulatory Framework

The Regulatory Code includes the following statements.

Housing associations must provide good quality housing services for residents and prospective residents by:
- seeking to offer a choice of home, while giving reasonable preference to those in priority housing need;
- using lettings policies that are fair and reflect the diversity of their client groups

Housing associations must work with local authorities to enable the latter to fulfill their duties to:
- homeless and people in priority housing need;
- vulnerable people and those covered by the Government’s Supporting People policy.

The Housing Corporation (TSA) circular 02/07 ‘Tenancy Management Eligibility and Eviction’ covers how criteria for eligibility should be set in order to:
- not take the association outside of the regulatory framework regarding rent arrears, asb, previous convictions, the association’s main lettings policy will apply.
- ensure that applicants should not be excluded automatically from housing if their circumstances “fit” a defined category, every case must be judged on its merits and efforts made to resolve any possible ineligibility.

The circular has a specific short section on local lettings policies “Where associations operate local lettings policies, these should demonstrably and reasonably balance the competing demands of local authority nominations and pressing housing need against policies promoting balanced communities”.

What a Local Lettings Plan must have

- Clear information to all customers regarding access
- For Choice Based Lettings the criteria must be clearly stated within the advert
- A robust mechanism for appeals
- Clear commitment to equality and opportunity and a completed impact assessment
- Sound quality assurance frameworks to provide audit trails, demonstrate decision – making processes and checks to ensure allocation fits policy intentions
- Measurements in place that clearly demonstrate the impact of the plan
• Review cycle
• Impact report completed after 12 months to decide if the plan should continue

**Existing Schemes**

The LLP will have data collated that is most applicable to the purpose of the plan i.e. if it is to tackle ASB the data would be on the prevalence and seriousness of ASB during a particular period. In addition the TSA have requested that associations include the following data to highlight lettings activity.

• Turnover – including length of tenancy
• Number of lettings via nominations
• Rejected nominations and reason for rejection
• Lettings to statutory homeless households
• Lettings to other homeless households
• Failed tenancies and the reason for the failure
• Households accessing support services

**LLP Scheme**

**Introduction**

Avondale Drive consists of 7 blocks of 4 one bedroom flat’s situated in Castlefields with close proximity to amenities, transport and the town centre. Over the last three years 16 flats have become void and in the main have been re-let to single males. A number of these individuals have had mental health and substance misuse issues. This has resulted in an increase in anti-social behaviour in the area and despite intensive housing management and partnership working with the local policing team. The company was successful in evicting three known drug users. Prior to evicting the third, for ASB, the company had to obtain an ASB injunction with a power of arrest attached. These legal actions resulted in a considerable financial cost.

The reputation of the area has suffered; the local residents have also suffered as a result of the ASB. This has impacted directly on demand and the lettings team finds it increasingly difficult to let properties in this area. This specific small neighbourhood is not a balanced one in terms of age range, economic mix etc. and therefore it is suggested that the long term sustainability of the immediate area is at risk.

**Overall Aim**

The local lettings policy will contribute to the Severnside overall aim of delivering our vision of ‘Vibrant Communities in Shropshire’.

It will be used to achieve the following objectives:
• Contribute to the stability and sustainability of Avondale Drive
• Reduce the potential for anti-social behaviour in the area of Avondale Drive and the wider community of Castlefields
• To monitor and positively challenge all instances of anti-social behaviour in this area
• To ensure an open and transparent approach which is fair and does not discriminate directly or indirectly, on racial or other equality grounds

**Access to the Housing Register**

Severnside Housing’s lettings policy outlines who is eligible to apply to join the housing register. In order to achieve our aims, additional criteria must be fulfilled:

• Applications will be accepted from all sections of the community who are aged 45 or over
• If they, or a member of their household are a tenant of a private landlord, housing association or council, be able to supply a tenancy reference from their present landlord.
• Applicants or existing tenants of the company have no current arrears, former tenant arrears or other tenancy related debt.
• Existing tenants of the company must not been convicted of or had any legal action taken against them or had served upon them a Notice of Seeking Possession for:
  o Violence
  o Harassment
  o Racial harassment
  o Threatening Behaviour
  o Evidence of involvement in drug supply/possession
  o or any other form of anti-social behaviour

**Type of tenancy**

• New applicants will be offered a Starter tenancy in line with the company’s allocation policy
• Existing assured tenants of the company will be offered an assured tenancy

**Monitoring and review**

• Quarterly reports will be provided to Head of Housing by the Neighbourhood teams showing the effectiveness of the plan
• Concerns relating to the plan will be included in the quarterly review to enable necessary amendments to be made for continuous improvement
• A formal review of the whole procedure will be completed on an annual basis