
REPORT TO: HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM:

15

DATE OF MEETING: 13 MARCH 2003

CATEGORY: DELEGATED

REPORT FROM: SANDRA WHILES

OPEN PARAGRAPH NO:

MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT: MARK ALFLAT EXT 5716

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SUBJECT: PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL POLICY

REF: MEA/LJW

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

TERMS OF REFERENCE: CS6

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Committee approve the proposed Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy.
- 1.2 That authority be given to the Environmental Health Manager to make minor amendments as result of formal consultation with interested parties.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To bring before Committee a Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy to comply with the Government's Regulatory Reform Order on Housing Renewal Strategy which came into force on 18 July 2002.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The Government's Regulatory Reform Order on Housing Renewal came into force on 18 July 2002. It has important implications for Local Authorities because it repeals much of the existing prescriptive legislation governing the provision of Renewal Grants for Private Sector Housing. This is replaced by a new wide ranging power to provide assistance for Housing Renewal although Disabled Facility Grants will remain as a mandatory entitlement with its own ring-fenced budget.
- 3.2 In future, this means that Council will have much greater freedom and flexibility to offer alternatives to direct grant aid to homeowners for repairs and improvements. These might include:
 - Loan packages such as equity release scheme
 - Loan and mortgage indemnities
 - Supply of discounted material
 - Assistance through tool hire schemes
 - Provision of labour
 - Support for purchase and relocation where a home is unsuitable for improvement repair or adaptation
 - Any other action which the Council deems appropriate

- 3.3 These changes are being implemented as part of the Government's commitment to improving housing quality across all tenures, including owner/occupiers. They are also seen as helping fulfil its broad aims to:
- Provide better opportunities for people to repair homes from their own resources where they are able to do so.
 - Target help through grants and other financial assistance for those who are trapped in poor quality housing that they cannot afford to repair.
- 3.4 The principle limitation on the use of the new powers is that it must be used in accordance with a policy that has been adopted and publicised. In addition, Local Authorities must:
- Satisfy themselves that the recipient of any financial assistance has received appropriate advice and information on any obligations arising.
 - Take into account people's ability to afford any contributory payment they must be required to make as part of such assistance.
- 3.5 In the light of these changes, it is necessary to publish the Council's Private Sector Housing Policy before 18 July 2003 when the existing legislative framework is repealed. If the Council does not have a policy in place by this time, it cannot make any provisions for Private Sector Housing whatsoever.
- 3.6 The review must be carried out in consultation with a range of stakeholders including:
- Walbrook Home Improvement Agency
 - Private Landlords
 - Landlords' Associations
 - Council Staff
 - Selected Housing Associations
 - Other Derbyshire Local Authorities
 - The General Public
 - Neighbouring Authorities
- 3.7 Existing Strategies
- The Council's current Private Sector Renewal Strategy forms an integral part of its wider Housing Strategy. The strategy has been developed over a number of years taking into account such factors as:
- Private Sector stock condition
 - The needs of most vulnerable households
 - Changing legislation
 - An evolving regeneration agenda
 - An increased scope for partnership working
 - Available resources
- 3.8 The existing Private Sector Housing Strategy will be reviewed following adaptation of the Council's policy.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 Monies for the Private Sector housing stock is allocated from:

a) The Council's capital allocation.

b) Disabled adaptations capital money (ring-fenced capital money).

5.0 Corporate Implications

5.1 Amendments to the Private Sector Housing Strategy will have implications on overall housing strategy and crime and disorder and planning issues.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 The existing grant regime has provided real improvements to the Council's housing stock. The new provisions allow much more flexibility for Council's to carry out a wide range of measures to maintain and improve the Private Sector housing stock.

7.0 Background Papers

The Regulatory Reform Order Housing 2002.

