

## HOUSING REGISTER CONSULTATION RESPONSES

### Public Consultation

A 2 week public consultation ran from the 1<sup>st</sup> November to the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2012. The target for this consultation was people registered on Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council's housing register. There were a total of 25 responses to the survey. Only 5 of the respondents are currently social housing tenants, of either the Council or a Registered Provider, and this may be reflected in some of the comments cited below.

### Fixed Term Tenancy

Nearly two thirds of respondents stated that they would consider a fixed term tenancy.

Would you consider a fixed term tenancy?	No	%
Yes	16	64%
No	9	36%
Did not respond	0	0%

Specific comments were made in relation to;

- Overcrowding and need to access family housing as well as underoccupation, for example; *'Fairer to all, I know single OAPs living in 3 bed houses'*; *'Available housing needs to be effectively managed'*
- Difficulties of older and disabled households to move home for example, *'I want a lifetime tenancy when I get the right property which has been adapted for my needs'*.
- Desire for security of tenure, particularly for people with children, for example, *'having rented privately I would need a permanent home for my children without the possibility of having to move on again'*, *'security for my children'* and *'I don't want to keep moving about at my age and with decreasing mobility'*
- Better conditions than in the private sector, for example. *'previous experiences i.e. property having hidden damages, damp, wood rot, leaks'*

### Tenancy Length

How long would a tenancy need to last for you to consider moving to another property?		
2 years	7	28%
5 years	4	16%
10 years	1	4%
More than 10 years	4	16%
Lifetime	9	36%
Did not Respond	0	0%

**What do you think is a reasonable length of tenancy for most people?**

2 years	6	24%
5 years	7	28%
10 years	4	16%
10+ years	5	20%
Lifetime	3	12%
Did not Respond	0	0%

**Do you think there are some groups who should be entitled to longer tenancies (e.g. lifetime tenancies) because of their circumstances?**

older people	6	24%
people with a learning disability	1	4%
people with a physical disability in adapted homes	11	44%
offenders	0	0%
people fleeing domestic abuse	1	4%
young people	1	4%
households at risk of homelessness	5	20%
other	0	0%

Other reasons given were as follows;

- *Overcrowded young families*
- *Families with children*
- *Most of the above and people who regard their areas as their home town rather than a new neighbourhood.*

**Do you think there are some groups who should be given shorter tenancies (e.g. the minimum 2 years) because of their circumstances?**

older people	0	0%
people with a learning disability	0	0%
people with a physical disability in adapted homes	1	4%
Offenders	16	64%
people fleeing domestic abuse	3	12%
young people	2	8%
households at risk of homelessness	3	12%
Other	0	0%

Other reasons given were as follows;

- *I don't think anyone should be treated differently.*
- *Perhaps people who are only in the area for a short while due to their jobs/ their partners jobs*

## Community Cohesion

**Do you think shorter tenancies for affordable housing tenants could affect your community (for example because people will be less interested in getting involved)?**

Yes	10
No	13
Did not respond	2

When asked for comments on the impact of fixed term tenancies on communities, respondents were split in their opinions, with approximately half thinking shorter tenancies could affect local communities and half not, a selection of specific comments are shown below to illustrate these views expressed:

- *Most are not interested in the community*
- *Not interested in the community or the property, just use it as a base to live*
- *I think less people will want to live in the area because they are paying for shorter tenancies*
- *The impact may be parents not getting their children involved as much with local events. It may affect children whose parents are on a two year tenancy e.g. schooling, making and keeping friends.*
- *Maybe those people on short term lets would bring in a freshness to the community*
- *People won't care about their houses or gardens as they would think will they are not here for long so why maintain it*
- *I think as the demand to live in Bosworth is quite high, people with shorter tenancies could be moved out of the area for more suitable housing with no choice*
- *People won't be interested*

**Q09 Do you think that the length of tenancy should be different in different locations (e.g. giving longer tenancies in small rural villages where there are not alternative properties to move in to if the tenancy was ended)?**

yes	4
No	7
Did not respond	14

More than half chose not to respond to this question, therefore specific comments on this question were limited however there were a high number of comments to support treating all tenants equally and fairly. Examples of comments include:

- *yes in smaller villages because of the lack of housing available.*
- *yes I do. I also think longer tenancies should be given to parents with young children so they get a sense of community and stability. It is not good for them to keep moving schools. Young families need help.*
- *Every tenancy should be treated equally*
- *It should be the same rules for everyone.*
- *Depends on the circumstances.*

### **Information for homeseekers to decide whether a home let on a fixed term tenancy meets their needs**

Only half of respondents chose to answer this question. Comments were made in regard to general information required to make an informed choice about a property, particularly local services and amenities (such as location of GP surgeries / schools) and specific property details (more pictures of the houses, the type of house and if they could have a good standard of living there.) A comment also asked for information on availability of properties as they had been waiting to move for ages. The need to provide information based on needs of individual was also mentioned (whether or not there is disabled access for disabled people).

A number of comments were made that directly related to fixed term tenancies, these related to the need for information being set for the length of the tenancy. The following specific comments were made:

- *just statement of length of tenancy and continuance of information already provided. It is up to individuals to form their own judgements based upon that information*
- *if they plan to stay in the let for the short term or long term depending what their needs are – give them all the alternatives but keep it simple.*
- *the possibility of being kicked out at end of tenancy. The choice of properties available and whether they get a choice in refusing a property offered.*

### **Tenancy Renewal**

#### **Q11 - What factors do you think should be considered when deciding whether to renew a tenancy?**

<b>Household income</b>	9	36%
<b>Age of tenants</b>	4	4%

<b>the need for adaptations</b>	5	20%
<b>Whether the home has more bedrooms than the household now needs</b>	6	24%
<b>How easy it is to find more suitable housing in the area</b>	4	16%
<b>Other (Please State):</b>	0	0%

Other reasons given were as follows:

- *If the people have been a public nuisance or not*
- *You're the Council, you're there to help people, that's what we are paying taxes for isn't it?.*
- *Whether the house is what they need, if the house is where they need or want to be for schools and family etc*
- *If any problems in the past how quick the landlord was to fix or repair, and vice versa*
- *Whether they have been good tenants*
- *If a child is settled at school they should be left there. If a family member has an injury/ illness that requires they need help.*

Respondents were asked what should happen if a landlord was not going to renew the tenancy. The majority of respondents stated that housing options advice should be given to help people find a suitable alternative property. Other comments included a need for time to be given to find another home. A selection of these comments are shown below:

- *Dependent upon reasons for non-renewal. This will presumably affect points awarded towards social housing eligibility.*
- *Meetings with landlord and third parties*
- *Emergency housing i.e. council pay until you find them somewhere.*
- *Other options available to them to rent, and a referral to reputable rental agencies .*
- *Support with housing for people on a low income if needed or a rent payment system*
- *Perhaps council could enquire personally to landlord and ask for their reason why they won't renew it maybe they should only have the chance to do so if the tenants have given good reason for this i.e. generally unsociable disrespectful people*
- *Information as to why it is not going to be renewed, if it is fair and could you appeal if you felt it wasn't. Someone to liaise on your behalf to avoid any upset on both parties.*
- *The impact on the household, e.g. if they were to move would it affect work, school, childcare etc*

## **Affordable Rent**

Respondents wanted easy to understand information on the costs of a property and to be able to understand the impacts of future rent increases.

Many of the comments were around financial advice and housing benefit entitlements; respondents expressed a need for better information on how they could get help with their rent and a number also wanted financial advice to understand how affordable rent would be affordable to them; several suggested individual income and expenditure assessments. Specific comments to illustrate the views expressed are shown below:

- *Could you be entitled to housing benefit to help with cost*
- *A budget planner.*
- *Breakdown of the costs and a review of the household income, so a meeting with someone so everybody understands.*
- *Whether my financial situation could cope with the raise in rent.*
- *Someone to come and explain it to me clearly, as I don't understand and have not heard of the new higher affordable rent level and not sure if I would be able to afford it*
- *Working couples only.*

### **Choice Based Lettings Advert Information**

The main comments were for clear information on the terms of the tenancy and information on its length and rent costs. Some respondents stated that the information currently provided is sufficient, where as others would like to see more detail on the property, such as room sizes, and amenities. Specific comments to illustrate the views expressed are shown below:

- *Length of tenancy on each property, what would happen when the tenancy runs out.*
- *All appears OK as it is*
- *All the upkeep info inside and outside the property so not to become scruffy*
- *All information i.e. when it starts, when it ends, what will happen when it ends, what it includes*
- *Explaining the length of time and what is expected of the person taking on the tenancy, in easy to read print but so it stands out.*