



# **Tenancy Strategy 2012-17**

# Contents

1. Introduction .....	3
1.2 Overview.....	3
1.3 Strategic Context .....	4
Figure 1 Blaby District Council Strategic Framework – Housing .....	4
1.4 Local Context.....	4
2. Blaby District Council Recommendations .....	5
2.1 Affordable Rent.....	5
2.2 Affordable Rent in the District of Blaby .....	6
Figure 2 Social and Affordable Rents in Blaby District .....	6
Figure 3 Guidance to Registered Providers – Affordable Rent.....	7
2.3 Fixed Term Tenancies .....	8
2.4 Fixed Term Tenancies in the District of Blaby .....	8
Families with children of school age or younger .....	9
Single and couple households under the age of 50 .....	9
Households on a low income, but not in receipt of housing benefit .....	9
Households with a disabled member .....	10
Older people over the age of 50 .....	11
Figure 4 Guidance to Registered Providers – Fixed Term Tenancies ..	11
3. Blaby-Homes Housing Register and allocations criteria for affordable housing. ....	12
3.2 Allocations in the District of Blaby.....	12
4. Impact on Homelessness. ....	12
4.2 Use of the private rented sector in the District of Blaby .....	13
5. Review of this Strategy .....	13
Appendix A – Spectrum of Rents .....	14
Appendix B – Public Consultation .....	15

# 1. Introduction

1.1.1 The Localism Act places a duty on local authorities to produce a Tenancy Strategy which sets out the objectives that Registered Housing Providers should take into account whilst setting their individual tenancy policies.

1.1.2 This strategy has been developed in full consultation with key stakeholders in the District of Blaby and will be reviewed every 5 years.

## 1.2 Overview

1.2.1 The Localism Act tackles many issues including the way that social housing is developed, let and managed. The Government feel that social housing is a scarce resource, that there are too many people living in costly, temporary accommodation and also that the housing benefit bill is out of control. They believe that social housing is not providing a stepping stone to greater security as it should be, but is instead creating a high level of dependency, worklessness and a poor image among the general public. The changes proposed to the social housing and benefits systems are an attempt to address this.

1.2.2 The changes will enable providers of affordable rented homes to be able to grant fixed term tenancies. This is a move away from the current situation whereby as long as the conditions of the tenancy are complied with and the rent is paid then social rented homes were considered to be a tenancy for life.

1.2.3 Existing Housing Association tenants will not be affected by these changes, and will continue to enjoy their existing security of tenure and other terms and conditions, including the right to buy, succession rights and the right to exchange their tenancy with another secure tenant.

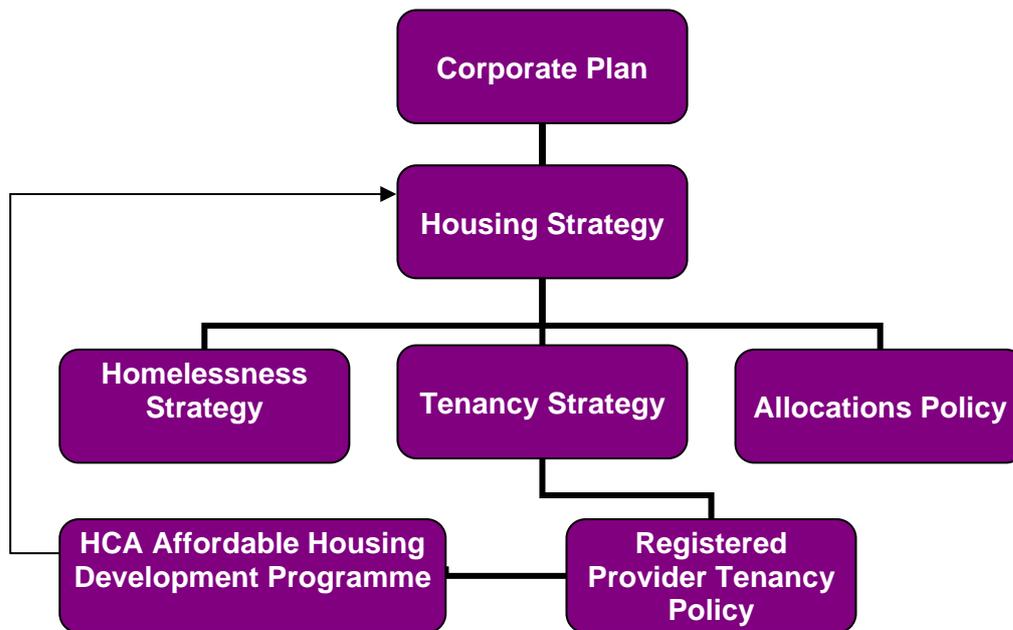
1.2.4 This Tenancy Strategy is Blaby District Council's response to the changes introduced by the Localism Act. It sets out what we would like Registered Providers with affordable housing stock in the district to consider with particular reference to the following four areas:

- The introduction of the new 'Affordable Rent' product
- The use of fixed term tenancies
- The potential to make changes to the Blaby-Homes Housing Register and allocations criteria for affordable housing
- Changes to the way we use the private rented sector to house homeless people.

### 1.3 Strategic Context

1.3.1 The Tenancy Strategy which has been developed in consultation with our Registered Provider partners sits as an appendix to the Council's Housing Strategy. The relationship with other key strategy documents is shown in the diagram below.

Figure 1 Blaby District Council Strategic Framework – Housing



1.3.2 The Council's Community Plan (Sustainable Communities Strategy) and the Blaby District Council Corporate Plan has a number of ambitions, including:

***"The housing needs of communities will be met, including ensuring affordable housing for all age groups across the District."***

1.3.3 At the time of producing this strategy the Council are also updating their current housing strategy action plan which includes the following relevant points that will relate to this strategy, including:

***"Maximising affordable housing opportunities"***.

***"Giving consideration to the housing needs of vulnerable households", and***

***"Producing a tenancy strategy to inform registered providers of the Councils expectations for future tenure"***.

### 1.4 Local Context

1.4.1 The District of Blaby has a population of approximately 94,000. Levels of owner occupation are high and the housing stock contains a high proportion of larger family homes, and relatively low

proportions of smaller properties. Both the social and private sectors in the district are small.

- 1.4.2 New households wishing to purchase an entry level property need an average annual income of approximately £36,000 and a significant deposit. The latest update to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2011 indicated that there is a requirement for approximately 344 new affordable housing units per year to meet the need in the District.

## **2. Blaby District Council Recommendations**

### *2.1 Affordable Rent*

- 2.1.1 The Comprehensive Spending Review 2010 introduced Affordable Rent as an alternative to the traditional social rent. Affordable Housing is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) as follows:

*Affordable housing: Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.*

*Social rented housing is owned by local authorities and private registered providers (as defined in section 80 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008), for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. It may also be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with the Homes and Communities Agency.*

***Affordable rented housing is let by local authorities or private registered providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).***

*Intermediate housing is homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels subject to the criteria in the Affordable Housing definition above. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing.*

*Homes that do not meet the above definition of affordable housing, such as "low cost market" housing, may not be considered as affordable housing for planning purposes.*

National Planning Policy Framework: Glossary, p.50

2.1.2 Registered Providers who have entered into a development contract with the Homes and Communities Agency are able to develop new houses to be let as Affordable Rent tenancies. These providers are also able to convert a proportion of properties to Affordable Rent that become available for re-let. The increased income from Affordable Rent tenancies is expected to increase the borrowing capacity of Registered Providers, enabling them to finance more new affordable homes without using as much public subsidy.

## 2.2 Affordable Rent in the District of Blaby

2.2.1 Prior to the introduction of affordable rents all rented products in the affordable housing sector have been let at social rented levels. The following table shows a comparison of current social rents and the potential affordable rents:

**Figure 2 Social and Affordable Rents in Blaby District**

Blaby	Average RP gross social rents	Equivalent 80% Affordable Rent	£s difference	% difference
Bedsits	£59.32			
One bedroom	£65.16	£77.08	£11.92	18%
Two bedrooms	£71.23	£100.31	£29.08	41%
Three bedrooms	£74.79	£120.25	£45.46	61%
Four bedrooms	£90.83	£136.52	£45.69	50%

*Source: Establishing the need for the provision of "Affordable Rent" housing in Blaby – B Line Housing Information Ltd.*

2.2.2 Figure 2 highlights significant differences between social rent levels and affordable rent levels, particularly in larger properties. Changes to the welfare system include a reduction in benefits for some households. This could result in some households facing a shortfall in meeting their housing costs, and having to seek alternative accommodation.

2.2.3 The Council understands that Registered Providers will need to generate income through Affordable Rent to replace public subsidy. However in order to ensure that new affordable homes are genuinely affordable, and to avoid adverse consequences we recommend that Affordable Rents do not exceed Local Housing Allowance rates.

2.2.4 The Council commissioned an analysis of the impact and affordability of Affordable Rents in the District which has thrown up some important conclusions, including:

- The difference between social and affordable rents is most significant in larger family houses which are considerably more expensive than social rented homes (see Figure 2).
- Having taken into account the income profile for Blaby residents, Affordable Rent will be unaffordable to approximately 18% of those who may have a housing need.
- In order to best meet the current needs profile of the District, affordable housing supply could be justified as approximately 46% social rent and 54% affordable rent (including re-lets).

**Figure 3 Guidance to Registered Providers – Affordable Rent**

**Our guidance to Registered Providers:**

- **We recommend that Affordable Rents are capped at the Local Housing Allowance rate for each particular property.**
- **To enable effective monitoring of local housing supply, it is important that Registered Providers consult with the Council regarding their intentions relating to the conversion of existing stock to Affordable Rent.**
- **There are no legal requirements for Registered Providers to reinvest income generated by affordable rent conversions within the District of Blaby. However the Council would seek a certain level of commitment from Registered Providers that a reasonable level of local investment will take place.**
- **On Section 106 sites the Council is willing to negotiate percentages of affordable rent with Developers and Registered Providers on a ‘something for something’ basis, which may include an increased proportion of affordable homes on site, or a commitment to reinvest the increased return from those homes locally.**
- **We will not support the conversion of social rented properties that are subject to section 106 agreements to affordable rent.**
- **We expect all providers to advertise Affordable Rent properties through the council’s Blaby Homes choice-based lettings system, to ensure fairness and transparency.**

## 2.3 *Fixed Term Tenancies*

2.3.1 The Localism Act enables Registered Providers to let homes to new tenants on a fixed term tenancy. The act states that this will normally be for a period of at least 5 years, however in certain exceptional circumstances this may be for a period of 2 years. This change in tenancy arrangements is intended to allow Registered Providers to manage their housing stock more appropriately, encouraging households to move on when their circumstances change and therefore freeing up affordable homes for those who really need them.

## 2.4 *Fixed Term Tenancies in the District of Blaby*

2.4.1 In November 2011 the Council held a consultation event with our sub-regional local authority partners and partners from the Blaby Strategic Housing group which includes Registered Providers and voluntary groups. Consideration was given to the effects of fixed term tenancies for five different household groups, namely:

- Families with children of school age or younger
- Single and couple households under the age of 50
- Households on a low income, but not in receipt of housing benefit
- Households with a disabled member
- Older people over the age of 50

In determining our preferred tenancy option for each of the above household groups we considered the pros and cons from four different perspectives:

- ***The customer.*** The primary interests of this group are security of tenure, stability and affordability in the long term. The ability to move within and outside the social and affordable housing market may be of interest to some customers.
- ***The Council in its strategic housing role.*** The primary interests of the Council are to meet the need and demand for social and affordable housing and to achieve the vision for the district (this includes sustainable neighbourhoods and communities), making the best use of resources in the area.
- ***The registered provider and local authority landlord.*** The primary interests of providers are to meet the need for social and affordable housing, to enable sustainable neighbourhoods and communities, and to manage sustainable, not-for-profit, businesses.
- ***Other interested parties*** e.g., health and social care, advice agencies etc. Primary interests include improved health and wellbeing, reducing inequalities and disadvantage as well as economic stability.

2.4.2 Generally speaking the Council would like providers to issue a tenancy for a minimum of 5 years for most household groups. However we are keen to ensure that our most vulnerable households are provided with the level of stability they require. This is explained in more detail for each of the five household groups below:

### **Families with children of school age or younger**

2.4.3 Our preferred tenancy terms are:

#### ***A minimum of a five year fixed term tenancy***

2.4.4 Security and stability during a child's education is critical to educational attainment. Families also rely on nearby friends and relatives to provide care for their children. We expect these factors to be considered by providers in reaching a decision about the use of fixed term tenancies for this household group.

2.4.5 We are particularly interested in working with providers to explore how under-occupation in family homes can be addressed through the use of fixed term tenancies.

### **Single and couple households under the age of 50**

2.4.6 Our preferred tenancy terms are:

#### ***A minimum of a five year fixed term tenancy***

2.4.7 We recognise that shorter tenancies may be deemed appropriate by providers and their partners, for example for households who are in fixed-term local employment, or households who are in transition to another form of accommodation.

### **Households on a low income, but not in receipt of housing benefit**

2.4.8 Our preferred tenancy terms are:

#### ***A minimum of a five year fixed term tenancy***

2.4.9 We recognise that shorter tenancies may be deemed appropriate by providers and their partners in certain circumstances. These may relate to the type of property e.g. non-family housing and/or the characteristics of the applicants e.g. younger working households may simply be seeking a short term solution to enable them to access home ownership.

2.4.10 We would like to work with providers to develop suitable financial inclusion services.

### **Households with a disabled member**

2.4.11 Our preferred tenancy terms are:

***Fixed term tenancies only to be used to enable the best use of adapted stock***

***A minimum ten year fixed term tenancy where it is likely that the disabled person will remain living in the property for some time and still require the adaptations***

2.4.12 We recognise that shorter tenancies may be deemed appropriate by providers and their health and care partners, for example we acknowledge that a two year tenancy in an adapted home may be deemed appropriate where a household member has a recoverable injury/condition and is fully expected to move on into a non-adapted home. It may also be appropriate for shorter tenancies (of not less than five years) to be used where there is an adapted family home and the needs of the disabled child may change, or the child may move out.

2.4.13 Easy access to education and employment, health, care and support, and to informal support networks, may be particularly important to this household group. Access to adaptations is also important. Providers are asked to consider these factors in making decisions about the use of fixed term tenancies for this household group.

## Older people over the age of 50

2.4.14 At this stage our preferred tenancy terms are:

***A minimum of a five year fixed term tenancy for older people living in general needs accommodation***

***Lifetime tenancies for older people living in sheltered housing***

Figure 4 Guidance to Registered Providers – Fixed Term Tenancies

### **Our guidance to Registered Providers:**

- **The Council recommends that Registered Providers consider the implications for each of the above household groups when issuing fixed term tenancies**
- **The Council considers that in most circumstances housing providers should seek to renew a tenancy at the end of a fixed term**
- **Where a decision has been taken by a Registered Provider not to renew a fixed term tenancy the provider should seek to engage with the tenant at the earliest possible opportunity to make them aware of the provider's intentions**
- **Upon termination of a tenancy we would expect the provider to notify the council of the decision to end the tenancy**
- **Households affected by the termination of a tenancy should be provided with support, advice and assistance by the Registered Provider to enable them to successfully relocate to alternative accommodation**

2.4.15 Blaby District Council requires Registered Providers to produce and publish a Tenancy policy in plain English explaining:

- The kind of tenancies they will grant
- The circumstances in which they will do this
- The length of tenancy terms
- The circumstances in which a further tenancy will be granted
- The procedure for taking possession proceedings
- The procedure for requesting a review of the decision not to renew a tenancy

2.4.16 A link to each tenancy policy will be provided on the Councils website.

### **3. Blaby-Homes Housing Register and Allocations Criteria for Affordable Housing.**

3.1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 placed a duty on local authorities to operate an open waiting list, meaning that anyone could apply for housing regardless of their circumstances. The Localism Act 2011 gives local authorities the power to exclude applicants from their lists if they wish to do so, therefore allowing local authorities to decide upon who can apply for housing in the future.

#### *3.2 Allocations in the District of Blaby*

3.2.1 At this stage the Council is yet to make a decision regarding limiting access to the waiting list. However should restrictions be made then there is likely to be a review of the Allocations Policy. This in turn will require wider discussion with sub-regional partners who form the Leicestershire Homes Choice Based Lettings scheme. Whilst this strategy will not set out specific restriction, considerations will include:

- Amending the criteria for those that are most in need
- Considering increasing priority for those in work and on low incomes
- Whether people who have sufficient financial resources or equity in their current property should be excluded.

### **4. Impact on Homelessness.**

4.1.1 The overall purpose of this strategy is to ensure that best use can be made of social housing stock within the District however we must ensure that changes to tenure do not have an adverse impact on homelessness.

4.1.2 The introduction of both fixed term tenancies and affordable rents have the potential to increase the number of people who can be assisted with affordable housing through both an increase in supply and more effective use of existing stock.

4.1.3 Both of the above initiatives need to be carefully monitored to ensure that any unexpected consequences are mitigated and do not have an impact on levels of homelessness in the District.

## 4.2 *Use of the private rented sector in the District of Blaby*

- 4.2.1 The Localism Act gives local authorities the discretion to discharge their homelessness duty to the private rented sector without the consent of the applicant, provided that the tenancy is for a minimum of 12 months. In the case where a duty has been discharged to a private tenancy, the duty would recur if the applicant became unintentionally homeless again within 2 years.
- 4.2.2 Blaby District Council already has an excellent reputation for working with and engaging with private landlords and we welcome the opportunity that this change in legislation presents. Having the flexibility to extend the offer of accommodation to suitable private sector accommodation releases some pressure from the demand for social rented housing. At the same time the Council will continue to be mindful of the standards required from our private sector landlord partners and will ensure that accommodation is of a suitable standard, and continue to play a mediatory role, therefore reducing the risk of repeat homelessness.
- 4.2.3 The District's homelessness strategy and action plan will be amended to address the above.

## 5. **Review of this Strategy**

- 5.1.1 This strategy will be reviewed every 5 years as a minimum. Following national or local changes in policy the Council may chose to review the strategy before the end of the 5 year period. The Council will take into account any comments or suggested improvements to the strategy when carrying out a review.
- 5.1.2 If you wish to comment or discuss this strategy then please contact Ian Jones, Housing Strategy and Policy Manager on 0116 2727516 or [housing.strategies@blaby.gov.uk](mailto:housing.strategies@blaby.gov.uk)

## Appendix A - Spectrum of Rents

The following tables highlight the differences in current social rents, market rents and 80% of market rents (affordable rent). All rents shown are weekly and were current at November 2011. The market rents are an average of rented houses advertised on the Find a Property website.

Table 1 - Enderby

Property Type	Market Rent	80% Market Rent	Social Rent	Difference (Social/Affordable Rent)
2 Bed Houses	£125.08	£100.06	£73.58	£26.48
3 Bed Houses	£153.00	£122.40	£85.41	£36.99

Table 2 – Leicester Forest East

Property Type	Market Rent	80% Market Rent	Social Rent	Difference (Social/Affordable Rent)
1 Bed Flats	£94.62	£75.69	£64.59	£11.10
2 Bed Flats	£120.23	£96.18	£73.58	£22.60
2 Bed Houses	£120.92	£96.74	£73.58	£23.16
3 Bed Houses	£143.08	£114.46	£85.41	£29.05
4 Bed Houses	£127.85	£102.28	£93.11	£9.17
5 Bed Houses	£119.08	£95.26	n/a	

Table 3 - Countesthorpe

Property Type	Market Rent	80% Market Rent	Social Rent	Difference (Social/Affordable Rent)
1 Bed Flats	£98.08	£78.46	£64.59	£13.87
2 Bed Flats	£129.69	£103.75	£73.58	£30.17
2 Bed Houses	£130.15	£104.12	£73.58	£30.54
3 Bed Houses	£154.85	£123.88	£85.41	£38.47
4 Bed Houses	£213.46	£170.77	£93.11	£77.66

Table 4 – Rural Settlements

Property Type	Market Rent	80% Market Rent	Social Rent	Difference (Social/Affordable Rent)
1 Bed Flats	£104.54	£83.63	£64.59	£19.04
2 Bed Houses	£136.15	£102.92	£73.58	£29.34
3 Bed Houses	£154.38	£123.51	£73.58	£49.93
4 Bed Houses	£216.00	£172.80	£85.41	£87.39

## Appendix B - Public Consultation

A 6 week public consultation ran from the 6<sup>th</sup> March to the 13<sup>th</sup> April 2012. The target for this consultation was people that are registered on the housing registers of Blaby, Melton and Charnwood Councils housing registers. The survey was also emailed to approximately 500 applicants who had registered their e-mail address on the Blaby District Council Choice Based Lettings System. There were a total of 61 valid responses to the survey.

### Fixed Term Tenancy

Over three quarters of respondents stated that they would consider a fixed term tenancy.

Would you consider a fixed term tenancy?	No	%
Yes	47	77%
No	11	18%
Did not respond	3	5%

Specific comments were made in relation to;

- Overcrowding and need to access family housing as well as known local underoccupation, for example; *'Tenants shouldn't have the right to life term tenancies when we have single people in 2 or 3 bed houses and then a family of 3 in 1 bed.. basically if your over 50 and single you should down size to 1 bed it makes sense'*
- Difficulties of older and disabled households to move home for example, *'Haven't got the physical ability to keep moving as disabled.'*
- Desire for security of tenure, particularly for older people, for example, *'At my time of life I would like the security of having a home for life. I am 52', 'both me and my wife are over 70 so I would expect the tenancy to last our lives' and 'I need long term security for children's schooling.'*
- Existing tenants wishing to remain in their homes and have security of tenure, for example, *'Because my wife and I have lived in our current home for over 30 years. If we had been in a position to buy during that time we would have done so. Now that we are within a few years of retiring, we do not want to be faced with the prospect of having to uproot to another location, away from our friends and the community of which we are a long established part.'*
- The needs of prospective tenants to access affordable housing, for example; *'I am in desperate need for housing' and 'Any tenancy is better than none at all'*

## Tenancy Length

### How long would a tenancy need to last for you to consider moving to another property?

2 years	14	23%
5 years	18	30%
10 years	6	10%
More than 10 years	8	13%
	12	20%
Did not Respond	3	5%

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

2 years	9	15%
5 years	24	39%
10 years	8	13%
10+ years	13	21%
Lifetime	4	7%
Did not Respond	3	5%

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

older people	44	72%
people with a learning disability	33	54%
people with a physical disability in adapted homes	45	74%
offenders	1	2%
people fleeing domestic abuse	15	25%
young people	8	13%
households at risk of homelessness	18	30%
other	5	8%

Other reasons given were as follows;

- Families with school age children
- People with children under 3 years
- People with children who attend a near by school and have local village connections
- Families where the children will be living at home from birth, until they are adult

### 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	3	5%
people with a learning disability	4	7%
people with a physical	2	3%

disability in adapted homes		
Offenders	42	69%
people fleeing domestic abuse	16	26%
young people	33	54%
households at risk of homelessness	10	16%
Other	1	2%

Other reasons given were as follows;

- I think that everyone should be treated the same.
- economic immigrants

### 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)?**

	28
	30
Did not respond	3

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.

- *... people should get involved in their community wherever they live*
- *Reduced community cohesion, area may not be looked after, no ownership of area and not feel part of a community and therefore not sustainable in the long run.*
- *Fragmented communities which become slums because there's no pride in the area. Perhaps because people who know their tenancy is going to end soon will not become involved in making their surroundings clean and pretty.*
- *A great many of the houses in my area have been bought by their former tenants and of those that are still rented; many are occupied by long-standing tenants. I don't think having short term tenants in the area would make much difference to the established community. People sometimes move on, or pass away, new ones come in. That's just how it is.*
- *People won't care about their homes or the area around it. People who live in the same home for along time will spend time and money in keeping their homes nice and this make the community a nice place to live.*

- *I don't think there is much integration or much interest in communities anyway, there needs to be more community based schemes set up with communal places to go to, set up by the council.*
- *Just because tenancies may be fixed, surely it does not mean once each case is re-examined, that someone's tenancy may not be renewed if the tenant's circumstances have not changed?*

**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)?**

<b>yes</b>	28
<b>No</b>	30
<b>Did not respond</b>	3

Specific Comments on this question varied however there were a high number of comments to support treating all tenants equally and fairly. The comments also suggested the need to review tenancies on an individual basis and a number recognised specific housing issues in rural areas, such as community cohesion and access to support, education and employment. Specific comments to illustrate the views expressed are shown below;

- *consistency helps as its transparent but also should be based on individual needs*
- *If circumstances improve then the property should be made available to those more in need.*
- *I think everyone should be treated the same.*
- *Certainly in rural areas. People should not be forced to move from communities they are a long-standing part of, simply because they cannot afford to buy or rent another home in that area. If people choose to move - fine. But if they wish to stay in the same village as their family and friends, they should be allowed to do so.*
- *sympathetic consideration should be given to extending but should not be automatic as circs may change*
- *There should be a consistency in policy rather than different rules for different areas*
- *because rural communities would have less property available*
- *I think it should be the same for all tenants to make it fair on everyone.*
- *A roof over your head is exactly that, regardless of location unless particular circumstances dictate i.e. if someone lives close to a relative who may be a carer, then they need to remain living close by - each case to be reviewed individually.*

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

Comments were made in regard to general information required to make an informed choice about a property, particularly local services and amenities (such as access to transport, community facilities, bin collections, school details, details about the area e.g. crime statistics) and specific property details (number of rooms and their size, energy efficiency details, rent and council tax charges). A number of respondents stated that the information currently provided was sufficient.

Comments were also made in relation to tenants having their terms and conditions clearly set out to them, particularly in relation to antisocial behaviour and eviction action if tenants caused problems. Several respondents also highlighted need to provide information based on needs of individual.

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 and the terms of the tenancy agreement. The following specific comments were also made;

- *'the information would have to be explained in their tenancy agreement and also beforehand they should be made aware that if they are under occupying the house when the tenancy ends they will have to move'*
- *'appointments with an advisor to discuss options, a phone line for the same thing as not everyone can attend appointments & immediate housing when their tenancy ends.'*
- *'Just be honest & upfront and if they don't like the terms then they can always go to a private landlord with no rights as such.'*
- *'Obviously the need to know the length of the fixed term. The type of property they might be moved to in the future. What will happen if there is no available home in the area at the end of the tenancy.'*
- *'how easy it would be to change property if their circumstances changed.'*
- *'Period of rent pricing if fixed or increased throughout the tenancy.'*
- *'Could it be renewed, if so for how long.'*
- *'What would alternatives be and would there be help available to obtain alternative accommodation to coincide with end of tenancy'*
- *'Just put it in plain English in a letter, explaining what is on offer. Council letters generally don't communicate very well and tend to use over complicated language I find.'*

## Tenancy Renewal

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

Household income	24	39%
Age of tenants	33	54%
the need for adaptations	27	44%
Whether the home has more bedrooms than the household now needs	43	70%
How easy it is to find more suitable housing in the area	33	54%
Other (Please State):	4	7%

Other reasons given were as follows;

- family links should be considered
- To what degree a tenant 'belongs' in the area i.e. family history, family ties, workplace location, social circle, community involvement.
- I don't know, because everyone is different reason for living in council home.
- Connections and availability of daily living amenities.
- general welfare of tenant
- are they able to get a mortgage

Respondents were asked what should happen if a landlord was not going to renew the tenancy. The majority of respondents stated that either a guarantee of suitable alternative accommodation should be offered (by the landlord or local council) or that full housing options advice should be given to help people find a suitable alternative property. Other comments included a need for a good period of notice, assistance with moving home, promotion of mutual exchange, help from partners such as social services, mortgage including shared ownership advice. A selection of these comments are shown below;

- *I think that the organisation who provides the tenancy should have a responsibility to offer advice & support. Perhaps before mid-tenancy agreement.*
- *if the tenant has been a good tenant then every possible help should be given*
- *I think tenants need ample time to find another suitable property, they need help to find a property in an area that is suitable for them not just what is available, that would be counterproductive as they would be moving again if not suited.... We need to have the view that house needs to be a home, this in turn would produce a happier society.*
- *Help to find a new suitable home. Time to do this and perhaps help with the removal costs. If elderly/disabled physical help with the removal.*
- *I think the council or housing association should find a suitable accommodation if it's not going to renew the tenancy*

- *Vulnerability of clients personal circumstances should be considered. Sufficient time to find an alternative home that meets their need*
- *Tenant should be informed as soon as possible with reasons. Every assistance should be afforded to tenant in order for appropriate accommodation to be found.*
- *They should let us know 6 months in advance to enable time to consider options. To provide a list of homes to let within the area...*
- *Plenty of notice, help to fill out forms and the likes for other council property, a neighbourhood officer could be allocated?*

## **Affordable Rent**

Respondents wanted easy to understand information on the costs of a property, a clear breakdown of the costs including any deposit or service charges. They also wanted 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;

- *The information that is available for social housing rent is self explanatory and should be mirrored for other housing*
- *Knowing what the new affordable rent level is and making housing benefit easier to understand.*
- *I personally would not need information, the rent I struggle to pay in my current house with a private landlord is a lot more than I would be paying the council*
- *Clearer explanations of what a claimant would be entitled to in terms of housing benefit, council tax benefit etc.*
- *An advisor to talk you through it & a fair & simple way to sort it out*
- *A clear breakdown of what the rent costs, what it does or does not cover, if it goes up or down & how often.*
- *you should be able to tell if you can afford the rent*
- *Income & expense calculation based on the individual*
- *just the amount, and a breakdown of possible increases*
- *I would say housing staff need to be trained in order to provide an interview with the perspective tenant to find an affordable level for the tenant as per income.*

- *Whether the rent could go up in price after a few months, and also if it could still be covered by housing benefit for those needed.*
- *Breakdown of actual rent covering term of lease together with information relating to services (e.g. Council Tax, Water Rates etc) and any other ad hoc costs*

### **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. Consistent comments about the use of plain English in advertisements. Some respondents stated that the information currently provided is sufficient, where as others would like to see more information about the area the property is located in, suggestions included links to Goggle maps, crime figures, describing local services and amenities, including naming local schools. Specific comments to illustrate the views expressed are shown below;

- *Length of tenancy and cost of rent is all that is basically needed*
- *Type of tenancy, conditions and terms of tenancy any restrictions.*
- *Information should be displayed clearly about each tenancy and the pros and cons etc*
- *I think that there is a lot of information on the Choice based lettings site.*
- *Clearly state if the tenancy is fixed term; how long for; likelihood of getting tenancy renewed;*
- *Simple and straightforward terms and conditions - a fair system too.*
- *The length of term. Procedure towards the end of tenancy. A guide to help find a new home.*
- *I am not sure but I think the more info that you can give someone the better it is.*
- *What the area is like and what amenities and what crime level in that area is.*
- *Simple one line details of the tenancy agreement and it's cost including council tax, water etc.*
- *Opportunity for discussions/further information.*