

Localism, Housing and Planning

Briefing Note Part 3 of 3 on Localism

January 2013

This briefing looks at the new social housing reforms as part of the recent Localism Act and how it will affect our communities.

The social housing reforms will impact on communities as well as individuals, particularly around housing allocations and flexible tenancies. It is widely recognised that the reforms will alter the current relationship between tenants and social landlords.

One key concern is under-occupancy where rents will be based on the number of rooms in a house not the number of occupiers. So for example where a couple have been renting a property and one dies the remaining partner will be charged full rent or have to move from their established home.

And the short-termism of tenancies and the use of the private rented sector may put strain on communities and place wrap-around support for tenants at risk (see below).

The abolition of Tenant Services Authority and new position of local councillors in mediation for complaints has raised concerns by some over impartiality and the dual role of councillors.

The examples of community led housing solutions across the region highlight the fact that community enterprise can strengthen an area as resources are reinvested in economic and social development.

The general concern around social housing reform is that councils will now decide who gets social housing rather than have an obligation to provide it. Link this to the proposal that tenants should be moved on after a couple of years and the change from the previous system can be seen as very unsettling.

For example, one of the major issues in poor mental

health is inadequate or inappropriate accommodation, and related factors such as poverty, homelessness and rough sleeping.

Neighbourhood planning


Neighbourhood Planning gives local people a way to help shape their surroundings. The neighbourhood plans do this by helping local communities to play a key role in shaping the development of the areas in which they live and work. They give the right to designated neighbourhood forums to produce a Neighbourhood Plan or Neighbourhood Development Order or both.

Once a Neighbourhood Plan is brought into force, following a referendum, it becomes part of the statutory development plan for the local area and is used to decide planning applications in that area. A Neighbourhood Development Order will automatically grant planning permission for development proposals which comply with the order.

DCLG have funded four organisations to support community groups who are undertaking neighbourhood planning work - The Prince's Foundation for Building Community, the Royal Town and Planning Institute (Planning Aid), Locality and Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE). They will work on this with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).

The government is still looking at the programme of support to be made available to communities that want to do neighbourhood planning. Using the Localism Act they are considering options for more direct funding to communities. In the meantime they are providing up to

£50 million to local councils until March 2015 to enable neighbourhood planning.



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