

Central Area Forum, Wednesday 15th March 2006

Questions and Answers

From the Floor on the night:

Question: *Registered Social Landlords's can allocate 50% of lets. What criteria do they use?*

Answer: They have allocations policies that they follow and they are monitored by the Housing Corporation.

Question: *Do the Housing Corporation provide money to bring existing vacant or rundown properties up to scratch.*

Answer: Some money is available for rehabilitation but has to be bid for and rehabilitation can be expensive and not seen as value for money.

Question: *What is the size of the Council waiting list?*

Answer: Approx 2000 but this does not necessarily reflect housing need. The housing needs survey is a better measure and this is currently being looked at.

Question: *Will there be any grants for solar heating panels?*

Answer: Not that we are aware but we will find out if you leave your name. The energy efficiency advice centre in Buxton can offer advice on this.

Question: *What action do you take to free up under occupied council housing?*

Answer: we can't insist that people move on but we are looking at financial incentives.

Question: *What green policies has social housing got?*

Answer: We aspire to be green eg heating systems using high efficiency combi boilers, insulation and insulated render panels

Comment: As a board member of an RSL I believe that RSL's will have to get higher and higher scores on eco friendly issues eg providing bicycle stores

Question: *Couldn't the use of council owned land help to provide affordable housing. Land at Jubilee St New Mills was disposed of (this may not have been council land)*

Answer: HPBC is looking at a range of options and will always look at land disposal to achieve the best price

Question: *Does right to buy apply to RSL tenants?*

Answer: No not at present but the Government may look at this.

Question: *What has happened to the information from the Evaluation event?*

Answer: It is being considered by all partners.

Planning presentation:

Question: *What is situation on housing moratorium?*

Answer: The Moratorium has come as a result of government advice to encourage brown field regeneration. Moratorium does not apply to Buxton area.

Question: *What is affordable?*

Answer: Affordability is based on income of households approx 3 times income of household.

Additional information from an answer to similar question in Glossopdale Area Forum :

In the Local Plan it states that: "The 2001 housing needs assessment indicates that the vast majority (83%) of identified housing need relates to household groups with an average income in the range £8,674 - £19,442. This represents between 37% and 81% of average High Peak income (£23,737). Consequently affordable housing should be priced so as to be accessible to those within this income range.

Employing the principle in the Need Assessment that housing expenditure should not exceed 30% of net income this implies affordable housing should be priced within an indicative range of £43 -£85 per week at 2001 prices. (Gross incomes translated to net incomes x 30%)"

In the case of affordable social housing for rent the levels of rent are set using a nationally prescribed formula. The formula covers rents for both Registered Social Landlords and Council Housing. Although traditionally Housing Association rents have been higher than those charged by councils the aim is to have all rents calculated on a common basis by 2012.

The rent formula takes account of the size of the property, the market value of the property and average incomes across the county for workers in manual occupations.

As new properties are built grants are provided to ensure that the rents can be kept within the formula levels.

Housing Benefit is also available for those on low incomes. This is available to all tenants across the private and social housing sectors. Housing Benefit is means tested and targetted at individual tenants rather than keeping rents at an affordable level. "

Question: *If property sold at a discount is this for the life of the property?*

Answer: Yes it should be if it is affordable, but this provides practical difficulties unless it is done through an RSL who can manage this process. People can ignore restrictions.

HPCH presentation:

Question: *What is bidding for social housing in the context of properties available for letting?*

Answer: People can 'express interest' rather than bid for a vacant property and individuals circumstances will be assessed from those who express an interest. It is not cash bidding.