

## A Question and Answer Guide to the Key Points, in Plain English

### Question 1: What is the Tenancy Strategy all about?

**Answer:** The Tenancy Strategy is a plan about how the Council (and some Housing Associations) will manage their houses and operate their tenancies in the years ahead.

### Question 2: Why do we need a Strategy?

**Answer:** Significant changes are now taking place in the housing world:

1. The amount of funding we receive from the government for building new houses has been reduced as well as funding to provide support to people who live in our houses. It is likely that the funding will continue to reduce.
2. Most importantly, there is a new act of parliament which will change the way our housing is provided and managed. This is called the 'Decentralisation and Localism Act'. It became law at the end of 2011 and makes very important changes to the way Councils and Housing Associations look after their housing and build new housing. It also makes important changes to the way Councils can provide accommodation for homeless people.

A lot of the new rules and powers the Localism Act gives to the Council are 'optional'. In other words we can decide locally here in Derby which of these new powers we want to use and which not. If we do decide it's best to use these new rules and powers, we can sometimes decide when and by how much.

### *The Purpose of the Tenancy Strategy*

The point or purpose of the Tenancy Strategy is to consider and plan just how much in Derby we want to use the new powers that the Localism Act gives us.

### Question 3: Exactly what are these new powers or 'freedoms' and what changes might they result in?

**Answer:** There could be a number of changes but the most important ones are to:

#### ➔ **Tenancies** (or 'Tenure Reform')

Under the previous system, social landlords (Councils and Housing Associations) were usually only able to give lifetime tenancies. Sometimes

this meant that people would move into a social home at a moment of crisis in their life, and continue to live there long after their need for it has passed. Meanwhile there are people waiting for a social home who face much more difficult circumstances.

This new freedom means that social landlords will now be able to grant tenancies for a fixed length of time, a tenancy length of five years or more would be the normal length offered. There is no upper limit on the length of a tenancy and in some cases a lifetime tenancy can still be given. If a fixed length tenancy has ended the household no longer needs the home they may move into another home in the private sector or maybe buy a house of their own.

The purpose of this change is to allow social landlords to manage their social homes more effectively and fairly, and deliver better results for local communities.

### ➔ **Rents**

There is a new scheme for rents being introduced, called 'affordable' rents. These will be set at a higher level than current 'social' rents. They will apply to some properties that are newly built, and some existing properties when the current tenants move out and new tenants move in. They will not apply to all new properties or relets of current properties, just a proportion of them.

People on the housing register or 'waiting list' may be offered affordable rent properties, social rent properties or a mixture of both.

The purpose of this change is to raise extra money towards building more new houses.

### ➔ **'Allocations'**

This is about the way people apply for and are given social housing. Previously almost anyone could apply to live in social housing, whether they needed it or not. But as there is a shortage, we must give priority to those most in need.

The Council now has greater freedom to set its own policy about who should qualify to go on the housing register in Derby. This means that we may decide that people who have no need of social housing should not join the register. The purpose of this change is to make sure that social homes go to the most vulnerable in society and those who need them most

### ➔ **Homelessness**

People who experience a homelessness crisis need somewhere suitable to live. Quite rightly our duty to house homeless people who are eligible will remain.

However, under the previous rules, people who became homeless were able to refuse offers of accommodation in the private rented sector, which meant that they could be housed in expensive temporary accommodation until a long-term social home became available.

We now have the freedom to meet our homelessness duty by organising good quality private rented homes from private landlords. This option could provide an appropriate solution for people experiencing homelessness, at the same time as freeing up social homes for people in need on the housing register

#### Question 4: Who would the changes affect?

Answer:

- *If you are already a Council tenant with Derby Homes or with a Housing Association* these changes will not affect you, unless you choose to move home in the future
- *If you are not a tenant but you would like to be*, these changes are likely to affect some of the options that are available to you
- *Homeless households may in future be affected* and not automatically be offered social housing. Instead they may be offered suitable privately owned accommodation
- *Housing Associations may use the Tenancy Strategy as a guide in developing their own policies*. But they will not be required to follow it and will make independent decisions on what changes to put into place

#### Question 5: Why do we need to make any changes at all?

Answer: There are two main reasons.

1. There are more people that want or need housing than there is housing available. For example there are around 7,000 households waiting on our housing register and the average time to get a 4 bed property is over two years. So we need to be more effective in giving housing to those who need it most.
2. The government is reducing the money it provides for building new houses and for support services to go with housing. So we need to be more efficient, reduce costs and waste, and find other ways to raise the money for new homes

#### Question 6: So what changes will we make and how will we decide?

Answer:

Our approach or plan is that we will introduce these measures in a controlled way. We will then review how things have progressed and make any further changes that are necessary. You can read the detail of our proposed action on the following pages of the strategy document. (A link to the document is given under question 7 below)

- Tenancies (or 'tenure reform'): Pages 23-26
- Affordable Rents: Pages 27-29
- Homelessness: Pages 29-30
- Allocations: Pages 31-32

But before we begin any new actions we want to hear the views of everyone in Derby with an interest. This includes housing associations and other service providers, but also those actually waiting for housing and members of the public generally. We will consider the consultation responses we receive before producing the final version of the Tenancy Strategy.

#### Question 7: How can I get involved?

Answer: Please join in the consultation process – it is open to everyone.

Details of how to do this are on the Council web pages at:

<http://www.derby.gov.uk/tenancy-strategy/>

Or you can contact us through the following:

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Derby City Council  
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