

**CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL**  
**NOTES OF THE**  
**SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP -**  
**REVIEW OF VULNERABLE PERSONS DECORATING AND GRASS CUTTING**  
**SCHEME (ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA)**  
**THURSDAY 16 AUGUST, 2018 AT 4.15 P.M.**  
**HELD IN THE DATTELN ROOM, CIVIC CENTRE,**  
**BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK**

Present:

Councillor C.I. Lea  
Councillor Mrs. P.Z. Stretton  
Councillor Ms. L. Tait  
Councillor Ms. C. Wilkinson

Officers: N. Samrai, Head of Housing, Partnership and  
Interim Property

J. Baldasera, Strategic Housing and Tenancy  
Services Manager

J. Broadhurst, Housing Maintenance Manager

**1. Appointment of Chairman**

The Group agreed that Councillor Mrs. P.Z. Stretton would be Chairman of the Working Group.

**2. Declarations of Interests from Members**

Nothing declared.

**3. Review of Vulnerable Persons Decorating and Grass Cutting Scheme – Eligibility Criteria**

**(i) Presentation – overview of Vulnerable Persons Decorating and Grass Cutting Scheme**

The Strategic Housing and Tenancy Services Manager and the Housing Maintenance Manager provided Members with a presentation which outlined the eligibility criteria for the Vulnerable Persons Decorating and Grass Cutting scheme.

It was explained that the current scheme had been in place since 2010

(amended 2011) and it replaced the Elderly Persons Decorating Scheme and Elderly and Disabled Grass Cutting Scheme. A free service was available to Cannock Chase Council tenants who fulfilled the criteria. Rules have been adopted to ensure that the scheme was restricted to those who were most vulnerable who have no alternative means of internally decorating their homes, or cut the grass. Tenants who qualify can have 2 rooms decorated once every three years and the grass cut 16 times a year.

The eligibility criteria for the scheme was outlined for Members information along with some facts and figures. Members also noted the issues that affected both the Grass Cutting and Internal Decorating aspects of the scheme.

**(ii) Approaches taken by other Social Housing Landlords Eligibility – verbal update**

The Head of Housing, Partnership and Interim Property referred the Group to the document that had been previously circulated to Members which provided a comparison of criteria and services offered by other organisations. She led Members through this document, which had been compiled by James Morgan, Housing Strategy Officer, explaining that the document contained a number of examples of how other Local Authorities administered the schemes. She asked the Group to give consideration to what was being offered by others when they put forward options to improve the service. For example she explained that Exeter City Council had a Garden Assistance Scheme which was only offered to tenants with a clear rent account and she asked Members to give some thought to this. The Group considered that this was something to bear in mind when discussing how to improve the current scheme.

Following the presentation the Group asked that the presentation and the document providing a comparison of criteria and services offered by other organisations be emailed to them after the meeting and a copy be placed in their pigeon holes.

In respect of the Grass Cutting service Members considered this was operating well. There was no waiting list and all eligible tenants who had requested to have their grass cut were receiving the service. There was therefore no need to alter the existing scheme in relation to grass cutting.

However, with regards to the Internal Decorating Scheme it was considered that it was important to retain the scheme but it was in need of review. The Group noted that it was fundamentally unfair to be waiting to get onto the waiting list for 7 years and then to have to wait a further 3 years to get to the top of the list. The Group made a number of suggestions on how to improve the service and the waiting time. These included changing the scheme so that either one room was decorated instead of 2 or the rooms be decorated every 5 years instead of every 3 years.

The Head of Housing, Partnership and Interim Property advised the Group that they should not be making any decisions at today's meeting. They should have a discussion between themselves outside of the meeting about the way they

thought the service could be improved. The Chairman would contact the Democratic Services Officer with suggested dates for the meeting of Members and the Housing Maintenance Manager should be available on the date agreed.

Members could then bring their ideas back to the next meeting which was provisionally booked for Tuesday 25 September, 2018. As not all Members were available on this date it was agreed that the Officer from Democratic Services would contact Members and Officers to agree a date for the next meeting at the beginning of October.

The Group discussed the scheme further and a Member asked if there was any possibility of an increased budget to carry out the service. The Head of Housing, Partnership and Interim Property confirmed this was not possible. She asked the Group to note that a proportion of tenants rental income paid for the Internal Decorating Scheme; however not all tenants benefitted from the scheme.

The Group noted that the scheme offered a choice of wall coverings (i.e. paint or wallpaper) and suggested that in order to save money and improve the scheme consideration could be given to only offering wallpaper in the main living room. The Head of Housing, Partnership Interim Property asked Members to note that the quality of plaster in some properties was poor and therefore painting was not an option, wallpaper was the only way to cover this up.

A Member asked if there was any way to improve the administration of the scheme and, if so, would this be of any financial benefit. The Housing Maintenance Manager outlined the way the scheme was administered and confirmed that improving the efficiency of the administration of the scheme had been looked at previously. It was considered that overall it ran efficiently. He commented that some thought could be given to refusals as some tenants refused to have the work carried out on the date offered because of attending a club/social event. This was different to a tenant refusing the date offered because of having a hospital appointment. Members asked how much notice tenants were given of the work being undertaken. The Group was advised that 2/3 months notice was given asking if they still wanted their room decorated. If so, the tenant was contacted 4 weeks in advance to confirm the date. Members noted that the tenant themselves was not required to be in the property when the work was carried out as long as someone over 16 was in the property. This could be a family member, relative or friend.

The Head of Housing, Partnerships and Interim Property commented that at present if a tenant was on the Internal Decorating list it was classed as a "golden ticket" as they were on the list for life. If an elderly tenant was on the waiting list for the scheme they may pass away before getting on to the actual list. She suggested that Members may wish to consider trialling a new scheme for a while to see what difference it made. The Housing Maintenance Manager asked Members to note that any trial should begin at the start of a new financial year (not part way through). The Chairman commented that it would not be necessary to change the scheme too much but just to improve what was being offered and improve the waiting time.

AGREED:

- (A) That the presentation and the document providing a comparison of criteria and services offered by other organisations be emailed to Members after the meeting and a copy be placed in their pigeon holes.
- (B) That the current Grass Cutting scheme was operating well and there was therefore no need to amend this aspect of the scheme.
- (C) That the current Internal Decorating Scheme was in need of review and Members should meet outside of the Working Group to make suggestions of how to improve this aspect of the scheme. The Chairman would contact the Democratic Services Officer with suggested dates for the meeting of Members and the Housing Maintenance Manager be available on the date agreed.
- (D) That the next meeting of the Working Group be held at the beginning of October on a date to be agreed.

The meeting finished at 5.00 pm.