

## Key recommendations arising from the Housing Review Working Group

1. Cheltenham Borough Council responds to the changes being brought about as a result of the new Local Housing Allowance Regulations and the introduction of the Welfare Reform Bill by:
  - Reviewing the Housing Options Service to ensure it best meets the needs of low-income households both currently in, and trying to access, the private rented sector
  - Aligning the Housing Options Service to meet the needs of Private Landlords, through the provision of appropriate landlord services
  - Tackling issues which may arise through reduced standards in private sector rented accommodation through the Private Sector Housing Team
  - Ensuring there is effective and timely advice and support given to those directly affected by the Local Housing Allowance changes
  - Re-commissioning the Advice Contract to reflect emerging priorities
  - Reviewing Gloucestershire Homeseeker's Allocations Policy to ensure it takes consideration of the welfare reform bill, specifically in relation to under-occupancy.
2. Develop a Tenancy Strategy to take account of the introduction of flexible tenancies by Registered Providers, in relation to:
  - The kinds of tenancies they grant, and
  - Where flexible tenancies are granted, the length of the terms, and
  - The circumstances in which RPs should renew a flexible tenancy

The Housing Review Working Group agreed that long-term flexible tenancies should be supported. Any Strategy will ensure regard is had to homelessness prevention and to supporting the Allocations Policy.

3. Ensure the proposed Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2012-17 is compatible with CBC's updated HRA Business Plan, ensuring that key priorities are aligned. Initial priorities currently being explored seek to
  - Support the provision of new affordable housing
  - Tackle fuel poverty
  - Introduce a programme of external works improvement
  - Build the capacity of communities, including non-cbc tenants, with a particular focus on improving the life changes of young people.
  - Manage the potential impact on tenants of any changes brought about by the implementation of the Welfare Reform Bill
  - Ensure the future provision of sheltered housing continues to meet rising expectations
4. Promote a consistent approach across the county to implementing the agreed Supporting People Strategy. This will be done through representation at the County SP Core Strategy Group and at the County SP Partnership Board, as well as through representation at Cheltenham's Housing & Support Forum.
5. To seek to ensure the support needs of our tenants in CBC Sheltered Housing continue to be safeguarded, following the implementation of the Supporting People Strategy.

6. Review, via the Gloucestershire Homeseeker Partnership, whether the Allocations Policy should be changed in light of new freedoms and flexibilities that could allow Local Authorities to re-house transfer tenants outside the allocations scheme, as well as allowing Local Authorities to close housing waiting lists to households not perceived to be in housing need.
7. To explore ways in which CBC is able to influence Registered Providers' decisions, when they are setting Affordable Rents and considering the scale of rent conversions, so as to minimise the risk of rents being set at locally unaffordable levels.
8. Improve the resilience of low income households affected by Affordable Rents through an increased focus on financial inclusion and capability provision in order to help sustain their tenancies.