



### Members of the Public's Questions to Housing Committee 5<sup>th</sup> February 2019

#### Questions from Debbie Hicks

1. Can you please state why 160 council homes you have confirmed as empty are being kept empty and not being used or refurbished for those waiting for housing and in priority need?

#### Reply

As stated at the Housing Committee on the 11th December 2018, 82 of the properties are part of the Sheltered Modernisation Programme as detailed in the report to Housing Committee in June 2016 Agenda Item 11. The programme is seeking to improve the quality of our housing offer for older tenants by improving the remaining schemes.

These 82 properties consist of the following:

One scheme comprising 32 properties has been sold since the Housing Committee in December.

A scheme of 10 properties is vacant. Tenants are being rehoused to enable the site to be sold to help fund the Sheltered Modernisation Programme.

A Sheltered scheme of 26 properties that have been decommissioned. The site is currently being used as a site compound to alleviate traffic problems in the area whilst the Council develops 11 new flats for older people on a nearby site. In the meantime planning permission is being obtained to redevelop the site to deliver a fully affordable housing scheme with a mixture of 1, 2 and 3 bed properties.

3 ex wardens homes that form part of the Sheltered Modernisation Programme will be incorporated into the modernisation proposals for that scheme. In the meantime various options have been considered to use these properties for temporary housing or used by other service providers. The Council has already converted 9 of the ex wardens houses into 17 flats to create additional accommodation for older people.

When Sheltered schemes are being decommissioned the Council looks to use the properties for temporary housing wherever possible.

In addition to the 82 units associated with the Sheltered Modernisation programme, there were, as of Monday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2019, an additional 35 units which were void (Empty). These numbers are always subject to fluctuation, and are dependent on the type and quantity of works required to put the properties back in good and lettable repair. Of this 35, 2 properties require planning permission for works and 16 are due to be brought in to use on or before 14th February 2019.

2. At the last housing committee meeting, in answer to a supplementary question asking if council owned homes would remain in council ownership from 2020, you stated that 'some wont, some will'. Can you please tell residents what council homes won't stay in council

ownership and in what locations?

**Reply**

The Council is committed to retaining the council's housing stock for social housing and all parties on the Council continue to support the new homes development programme.

Unfortunately I can't answer the question with any certainty, as the RTB legislation still exists in England and any qualifying home could be sold under the legislation.

However as detailed above, two schemes were due to be sold as part of the Sheltered Modernisation Programme, one of which completed in December 2018 at Dryleaze Court in Wotton Under Edge. The other scheme is Cambridge House in Dursley, which will be sold once all residents have been re-housed. All residents were consulted fully and supported with their move to alternative suitable accommodation to meet their needs. Two other sites are being developed to provide new affordable homes and so whilst the current homes will be demolished they are to be replaced with new energy efficient homes.

There are no other proposed sales currently envisaged.

3. Can you please state yes or no to the question, are council owned homes that are currently been refurbished and updated in the district being prepared for a private sell or hand over of ownership and if so, to whom?

**Reply**

With the exception of those subject to the RTB legislation, no, there are no properties currently being refurbished and updated in the district being prepared for a private sale or handover of ownership other than to council tenants.

Properties are only removed from the stock after consideration has been given to the re use of the site by the Council or another social landlord. Practice is to sell them without carrying out any physical improvements.

**Questions from Terry Kevans awaiting confirmation of mtg to put Q**

1. At the last housing committee meeting, it was stated that it was not possible to enforce E.D.M.O. (Emergency Dwelling Management Orders) because some were military houses can you please how many are in the district and where.

**Reply**

There are currently no military houses within the Stroud District, for which we have records.

2. As campaigners we have had hundreds of conversations with local residents rough sleepers and those in temporary accommodation waiting to be housed, will the council submit to democracy and listen to residents by participating in a community meeting to discuss how to respond to the homelessness crisis?

**Reply**

Whilst enforced austerity and the national housing crisis is contributing to increased homelessness, the Council has a good record of working with individuals and families to prevent homelessness. It also works very hard to minimise the use of temporary accommodation and has a good record of directly housing homeless applicants in permanent housing without the use of temporary housing. Additionally, P3 actively work to identify rough sleepers in the District and encourage them to take up accommodation on a

Housing First model. We are also looking to work in partnership with Drug and Alcohol agencies to develop accommodation to support the recovery process.

The Council is always willing to listen to suggestions as to how it can support the needs of the homeless. However a useful starting point would be to understand those measures and support that residents consider the Council could practically and lawfully engage in that are in addition to our current activities.

The Council is due to undertake public consultations in the coming months on both the housing strategy and the homelessness strategy and this will form the basis for public involvement in the development of our future plans. Myself and other members of the Committee will continue to meet with residents, voluntary organisations and housing organisations on a regular basis to maintain our understanding of the housing problems which face the district.

A disabled rough sleeper has been living on the streets of Stroud for the last few months can you explain what your duty is under the equalities and disability legislation and the homelessness reduction act to accommodate and house the disabled.

Reply

The council's duties to homeless persons can be summarised as follows:

Homeless – duty to advise and assist.

Homeless and eligible for assistance – to advise and assist.

Homeless, eligible but not priority need – to advise and assist.

Homeless, eligible and priority need – to advise, assist and provide interim accommodation pending enquiries (this is where disability is taken into account when regarding priority need).

Homeless, eligible, priority need but intentionally homeless – to provide accommodation for a reasonable period to give an opportunity to find their own accommodation. The Equalities Act 2010 requires the council to have regard to a person's disability when considering intentionality.

Homeless, eligible, priority need and not intentionally homeless – full housing duty unless referring to another Local Authority as having no connection here and having a connection to the other Local Authority.