



TENANCY STRATEGY 2012 - 2016

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 continue to 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 law called the Localism Act which changes the way our housing is provided and managed. This law 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: The most important areas where change is possible 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 could 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 a homelessness crisis, 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 choices 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 operation

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 6,000 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 did we decide?

Answer: Our approach or plan is set out below...

- **Tenancies (or 'tenure reform')**: We will make no changes to our current approach because we believe giving people life-time tenancies helps to maintain secure and stable communities.
- **Affordable Rents**: We do not wish to see rents rise but in some cases slightly higher rents may be essential to enable new homes to be built. In these cases we will support 'affordable rents'.
- **Homelessness**: We will use the new power to offer homes in the private sector as well as continuing to provide homes in social housing.
- **Allocations**: We intend to make some changes so that we're better at giving homes to people that need them the most and to try to reduce waiting times. But a separate consultation will take place to decide exactly what changes will be made and when.

In coming to these decisions we carried out a consultation process and invited everyone to give us their views. This took place between January and March 2012. For more detail on these issues, please see the Tenancy Strategy, which is available on our website [here](#).

If you have any queries about our Tenancy Strategy then please contact us through the following...

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