

Report of Housing Manager, Tenant Scrutiny

Report to Tenant Scrutiny Board

Date: 26 October 2016

Subject: Lettings Policy Review – Draft Feedback

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1.0 SUMMARY OF MAIN ISSUES

1.1 At the Board's meeting in February, following discussion with Councillor Coupar, Executive Board Member with responsibility for communities, it was agreed that Tenant Scrutiny Board would be consulted during the Lettings Policy Review process.

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback on behalf of Tenant Scrutiny Board in response to the proposed changes.

2.0 TENANT TRANSFER POLICY

2.1 The Board understands the benefit of introducing a tenant transfer policy which recognises good tenant behavior when allocating properties. It is acknowledged the allocation of properties based on good tenant behaviour needs to be balanced with meeting increasing waiting list demand and diminishing stock.

2.2 The Board acknowledges the benefits of adopting a tenant transfer policy as this will invariably release properties for applicants from the general waiting list. The Board feels that an allocation of 10% is a proportionate number of properties to allocate as part of the tenant transfer policy.

2.3 Undertaking home visits prior to offer of tenancy

The Board recognise the benefits of undertaking a pre tenancy visit prior to making an offer. This would enable staff to have a pre-tenancy discussion to confirm with potential tenants, their responsibilities such as rent payments and the opportunity to identify potential support needs. In addition, it would allow the Housing Officer to

establish a relationship with potential new tenants.

2.4 Allocating properties to applicants with a local connection

The Board has considered both the impact and the benefits of this proposal. Given the depletion of stock through right to buy and high cost void sales this is likely to reduce further the availability in areas of high demand and low stock availability. The Board would recommend that consultation is undertaken with existing tenants but also applicants on the waiting list.

2.5 Reducing and removing local lettings policies on flats which give preference to applicants over a certain age e.g. 40 years and over.

The Board feels that all existing local lettings policies should be considered on individual merit. There is an increasing age population which is likely to lead to more demand from an aging population.

Blocks should be considered on an individual basis and considerations such as; local infrastructure and facilities available should be taken into account for elderly and those with confirmed medical need. Also the Board believes that consideration should be given to retaining 50+ age restrictions to flats where the ground and first floor are sheltered housing.

2.6 The Board have raised legitimate concerns about the potential for legal challenge, based on age related discrimination, although the Board understands that Housing Leeds are working closely with Legal Services to ensure compliance with the Equality Protected Characteristics.

2.7 Clearance Areas

The Board feels that tenants displaced as a result of designated clearance areas should be consulted about the option to return if suitable new properties are built on the old site.

2.8 Decoration Vouchers

The Board feels that properties should be assessed on individual merit and where properties prove difficult to let because of poor decorations, an incentive should be offered. In addition, the Board recognises that some tenants have low income and should be supported if rehousing is necessary.

2.9 Applicants with a history of anti-social behaviour and rent arrears

The Board have raised concerns about applicants who have a history of anti-social behaviour and or rent arrears and enquired under what circumstances they would be allowed to return to Council accommodation. The Board were advised there is provision within the Allocation Policy to apply qualification criteria or reduced preference in certain circumstances, however, this would not be applied to victims of domestic violence or hate crime.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Board is asked to provide feedback on recommendations contained within this report.

4.0 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS¹

4.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.