

Committee: COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

Agenda Item

Date: 18 January 2007

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Title: **HOMELESS TEMPORARY
ACCOMMODATION**

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Item for decision

Summary

1. This report advises the Committee of the Council's current position on the use of Council accommodation and designated units of Registered Social Landlord (RSL) accommodation as temporary accommodation for homeless applicants.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Committee: -
 - (i) Agrees to convert a limited number of units of temporary accommodation into permanent tenancies within the Council's own stock.
 - (ii) Agrees to consult with the involved RSL to convert a number of their current temporary tenancies (Assured Shorthold Tenancies) to permanent Assured Tenancies.

Background Papers

3. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.
 - (i) Homeless activity report
 - (ii) Internal records

Impact

4.

Communication/Consultation	There will need to be communication/consultation with tenants in recommendation 1 and 2.
Community Safety	NONE

Equalities	NONE
Finance	There could be some indirect savings to the Council as voids will be slightly reduced
Human Rights	NONE
Legal Implications	Council has a statutory duty to provide people accepted as homeless with permanent accommodation
Ward-specific impacts	Across the district
Workforce/Workplace	NONE

Situation

5. Currently the Council has 34 homeless households in temporary accommodation throughout the district. These units are mainly hard to let elderly person's bungalows.
6. The Council also has the nomination rights to 3 Registered Social Landlord units which are being used as temporary accommodation for homeless families. These are in Newport, Stansted and Takeley.
7. The hard to let bungalows are mainly in parishes where there are little or no facilities e.g. public transport/shops etc and consequently there is little or no demand for these properties from local elderly applicants who are in housing need.
8. By using these properties as temporary accommodation the Council has been able to reduce the use and cost of accommodating families in Bed and Breakfast, instead providing them with more suitable self contained accommodation.
9. In each case where homeless applicants have been placed in temporary accommodation there is an expectation that they will in time be allocated permanent housing. However due to the high demand within the District for social housing in practice many people spend prolonged periods in temporary housing and during this time they become settled into the local community and eventually out of choice, if allowed, would remain in the accommodation on a permanent basis.
10. Of the 34 in hard to let properties currently used as temporary accommodation it is proposed to offer 14 of these to the current tenants as secure accommodation thus bringing to an end the Council's duties under

homelessness legislation. For the tenants this would mean that they would benefit from having a secure tenancy and be settled in the local community. It is also proposed to ask the landlord of the 3 RSL properties to convert these to permanent tenancies. Further information on these properties will be available at the meeting if required.

Targets

11. What we are trying to achieve is:
 - (i) Provide settled homes for people who are currently in temporary accommodation and prevent further social exclusion by moving them from communities where they have become settled.
 - (ii) Reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation in line with the Government's stated aim of reducing by 50% the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010. As an indirect consequence there could be some savings to the Council as there will be a slight reduction in void turnover.
 - (iii) To meet the Government's new BVPI introduced in April 2005 which measures the % change in the average number of families placed in temporary accommodation.

Options

12. To progress this issue we are proposing that further consultation takes place with those tenants currently in temporary tenancies with a view to making them offers of permanent tenancies.
13. We also propose to consult with our partner RSL and their tenants with a view to asking them to convert some tenants currently on ASTs to Assured tenancies.

Pay-Offs/Penalties

14. If the recommendations are agreed it would provide settled housing for tenants currently facing the uncertainty of being on temporary tenancies thus allowing them to fully integrate into their local communities.
15. If no action were taken the existing arrangements would continue and because of the limited number of permanent vacancies generated in any one year we would be unable to achieve government targets.
16. There would be a continued need to use hard to let bungalows and possibly some RSL vacancies as future temporary accommodation whilst present allocation policies are in place or we would risk seeing an increase in the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

Risk Analysis

17. The following have been assessed as the potential risks associated with this issue.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating Actions
Tenant might exercise the Right to Buy on bungalows. It is current policy to resist this where possible	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	Could result in further loss of stock, however a limited capital receipt would be achieved.
Increased use of bed and breakfast if future Properties not used as temporary accommodation	MEDIUM	HIGH	Impact on General Fund and possible loss of any further grant from the DCLG
Failure to meet Performance Indicator targets	HIGH	HIGH	Performance is considered and commented on by EMT on a monthly basis. Proposed Select Committee will focus on Corporate performance issues