

Committee Community & Housing Committee

Agenda Item

Date: March 17 2010

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Title: **HARD TO LET COUNCIL BUNGALOWS**

Author: Judith Snares, Housing
Options/Homelessness Manager- 01799
510671

Item for decision

1. Summary

This report looks at a proposal to change the designation of 'elderly' on certain hard to let council bungalows to allow general needs applicants to also express interest in them. This would reduce the current void time on some bungalows and make best use of council stock.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that discretion is given to the Head Housing Services to change the designation of 'elderly' on some hard to let bungalows to allow them to be advertised as also available to general needs applicants.

3. Background Papers

None

4. Impact

Communication/Consultation	Consultation with tenants via the tenants forum
Community Safety	None.
Equalities	Allocations policy subject to equality impact assessment
Finance	There could be some savings to the HRA if voids times reduced
Health and Safety	None.
Human Rights/ Legal Implications	Any policy changes need to comply with relevant housing legislation and codes of guidance
Sustainability	N/A
Ward-specific impacts	Across the district

Workforce/Workplace	None.
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Situation

5. Currently the Council's policy is that bungalows are advertised through the HomeOption Scheme to applicants over 60 years of age.
6. The Council from time to time has bungalows that are hard to let. These are mainly in parishes where there few facilities e.g. public transport/shops etc. Consequently there is little or no demand from local elderly applicants in housing need.
7. It has recently been the case where bungalows have been advertised more than once before any one has expressed interest. This of course increases the void/rent loss period on these properties.
8. Where properties have eventually been let it is often to applicants with little or no housing need and from outside of Uttlesford.
9. By changing the designation from elderly person's accommodation to that of open to any age group we can allow general needs and elderly applicants to express interest in the same property at the same time.
10. We can still choose to advertise hard to let bungalows with the criteria that in the first instance preference will be given to elderly applicants in housing need. So that if an elderly person with slightly lower points than a general needs applicant does express interest they will be offered the property first.
11. This change will allow for a better use of Council stock, stop bungalows being allocated to people with little or no housing need, shorten void periods but still ensure that elderly applicants in need are housed first.
12. New tenants, apart from those who are transferring social housing tenants, would initially be on introductory tenancies so that if there were any issues with a tenancy it could be ended or the probationary period extended.
13. In the past bungalows have been successfully let to general needs cases who were originally placed in them as temporary accommodation.

Conclusion

14. This change of use for some hard to let bungalows, will help to reduce the current void times with the negative financial effect this has on the Housing Revenue Account. It will also allow the for the best use council stock and see scarce council housing going to those who are in real housing need.

Risk Analysis

15. 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	1	1	Could result in further loss of stock, however a limited capital receipt would be achieved.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.