

**Committee: Housing Board**

**Agenda Item**

**Date: 24<sup>th</sup> January 2013**

**6**

**Title: Decant and Downsizing Policy**

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Item for  
recommendation

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### **Summary**

1. This report asks members to agree a new policy to explain the process that Uttlesford District Council will undertake and the level of compensation that will be given, when it becomes necessary to re-house a tenant to allow major repairs to be undertaken or where a property is to be demolished or disposed of.
2. The policy also details the payments that will be made to tenants who decide to downsize from a property that is larger than their needs.

### **Recommendations**

3. The Housing Board recommends to Cabinet the adoption of the Decant and Downsizing Policy.

### **Financial Implications**

4. A budget with the Housing Revenue Account has been identified to pay the compensation and downsizing payments. This budget will be monitored for the impact on it of the new policy.

### **Background Papers**

5. None

### **Impact**

- 6.

Communication/Consultation	Partner agencies and Tenant Forum
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	EIA has been completed
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	Home loss payments are covered by Acts of parliament.

Sustainability	N/A
Ward-specific impacts	All wards
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

## Situation

7. The Council currently does not have a formal policy on how it will compensate tenants who have to either temporarily or permanently move from their homes. With the Council now in the position where it is looking to re-develop existing housing sites it is important that a formal policy is put in place.
8. The Council does currently have a scheme for giving grants to tenants who downsize to smaller accommodation but this is a basic scheme and has limited take up.
9. With the implications of welfare reform, particularly the 'bedroom tax', it is important that the Council is making the best use of its stock and encouraging tenants to occupy homes that are of a size suitable for their needs and at a rent that they can afford.
10. We have recently undertaken a survey of tenants under-occupying their current accommodation. The outcomes of this have been used to formulate the new policy.
11. The policy proposes that there will be a flat rate of grant given to tenants moving to any older persons' accommodation and a sliding scale for those in general needs accommodation depending on how many bedrooms they are giving up.
12. The policy also proposes that as an alternative to offering a lump sum payment, tenants could opt to have payment of removal costs and carpets with a smaller cash payment, up to the amount of the full lump sum payment. It is thought that this might encourage some tenants to move who feel daunted by having to organise these things for themselves.
13. The policy has been discussed at the Tenants' Forum and they suggested that instead of a sliding scale for general needs tenants related to the number of bedrooms they were releasing, it should be a single grant of £2000 for all tenants downsizing regardless of what size of accommodation they were moving from.
14. Members may also wish to consider the options outlined in point 5.4 as to whether rent arrears should be deducted from disturbance allowance payments. The Tenants' Forum chose option C.

## Risk Analysis

13.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Compensation claims by tenants where UDC need to decant tenants from properties	3 - the council has to decant tenants to carry out major works - likelihood this will increase due to increase in major works to properties	3 – increase in legal costs if decant/compensation payment is challenged	Policy clearly defines levels and circumstances where decant compensation will be paid.

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.