

Committee: Housing Board

Agenda Item

Date: 6 October 2016

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Title: Decant and Downsizing Policy

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Summary

1. This report updates members on how the Decant and Downsizing Policy has been working since it was implemented in 2013.
2. The Decant and Downsizing Policy explains 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.
3. 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

4. That the Housing Board notes this report and agrees amended wording for clarification at points 18.1 and 18.3.

Financial Implications

5. There is an annual budget within the Housing Revenue Account that has been identified to pay any compensation and downsizing payments.

Background Papers

6. None

Impact

- 7.

Communication/Consultation	Partner agencies and Tenant Forum
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	EIA was completed prior to implementation
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

8. The council introduced a formal decant and downsizing policy for the first time in 2013, this report informs members on how this policy has been working since it was adopted.
9. Prior to this policy being adopted there was a basic scheme for giving grants to tenants who downsized to smaller accommodation but this had very limited take up.
10. The introduction of the spare room subsidy 'bedroom tax' made it particularly important that the council makes best use of its stock and encourages tenants to occupy homes that are of a size suitable for their needs and at a rent that they can afford.
11. In the first full year after the policy was introduced 20 tenants were awarded downsizing grants, in 2014/15 this dropped to 10 which was to be expected after the initial high take up. This year, to date, 10 grants have been given.
12. The policy has also been successfully used to compensate tenants who have been affected by our sheltered housing scheme redevelopments.
13. The feedback that has been received from tenants who have had a downsizing grant is that it is seen as fair and has helped them with the expenses of moving. Tenants who have not taken up the opportunity of downsizing have indicated that it is not the level of the grant that has stopped them but the thought of moving, preferring to stay in what they see as the family home or liking the area they currently live in.
14. Whilst it would seem that the latter two reasons for tenants not downsizing are harder to argue with, there may be work we can do around supporting older tenants to downsize with officer 'hand holding', as we have done with our sheltered tenants. Therefore this is something as a department we are going to consider and look to see who has the capacity to take on such a role.
15. There have been two minor changes to wording within the policy purely for clarification purposes. At paragraph 5 to clarify that disturbance allowance and home loss payment can be made in some circumstances to the same tenant.

The wording at paragraph 18 makes it clearer that it is the giving up of bedrooms that makes tenants eligible for a grant, not just that they are moving into designated elderly person's accommodation from general needs housing.

Risk Analysis

13.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Misinterpretation of policy	1 Current wording could be misinterpreted by tenants	1 May lead to complaints if tenants felt misled	Clarification in wording makes policy clear and unambiguous

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.