

Support with Moving Policy (Housing, Maggie Ward)

Synopsis of report:

In order to facilitate best use of stock and access more properties suitable for adaptation for larger households, a Support with Moving Policy will provide financial incentives to tenants giving up larger homes and additional support with the logistics of a move where required.

Recommendation:

Members approve a consultation with stakeholders on the draft Support with Moving Policy (Appendix A).

1. Context

- 1.1 Social Housing landlords have historically paid incentive sums to tenants to move to smaller properties as housing need has increased. Runnymede has provided financial assistance and practical support with moving to those residents downsizing. A large proportion of the Council housing stock is underoccupied by older tenants, many of whom live alone.
- 1.2 There is an increasing need for larger family properties, specifically those with two downstairs rooms that can be adapted to provide downstairs accommodation for a person requiring level access facilities.
- 1.3 The Social Sector Size Criteria which reduced the amount of benefit payable by 14% for one empty room and 25% for two, does not apply to people of pensionable age and so has had no impact on the level of under occupation in the borough. Most people only decide to downsize when they can no longer manage physically within their home and then request incentives which are not applicable as they want to move.
- 1.4 For older people on a low income with no capital, the cost of moving can be prohibitive or for those without a support network the prospect of managing a move can be daunting.

2. Report

- 2.1 Residents giving up a larger property will receive a payment to mitigate the cost of moving. Where a property has major adaptations or specific features that are no longer required and this is needed for another household, the Council will consider approaching the tenants and offering an incentive equivalent to the Statutory Homeless payment to secure this home. This payment will be significantly less than it would cost to adapt a family home for a disabled person requiring level access facilities.

2.2 Schedule of Payments

Number of rooms giving up	Incentive up to a maximum of	Authorisation level
One bedroom	Ten times weekly rent	Manager
Two bedrooms	Fifteen times weekly rent	Manager
Three bedrooms	Eighteen times weekly rent	Corporate Head of Housing
Move due to adaptation required	The statutory home loss payment	Corporate Head of Housing & Head of Housing Services & Business Planning

2.3 Eligibility for the scheme will be subject to criteria and acceptable management of the current tenancy.

2.4 Where a tenant requires adaptations, and they can be accessed by a mutual exchange the Council will consider financial assistance with a move subject to a means test.

2.5 Where a tenant is in receipt of a low income and has no capital to support a move additional support can be accessed from the Housing Discretionary Hardship Fund.

2.6 Council officers can provide practical support with the move, including arranging removals and packing, assisting the tenant to arrange flooring, cooker connections etc. subject to assessed need and where there is no support network. Housing staff will liaise with other agencies and charities to access support for the tenant where appropriate.

3. Policy framework implications

3.1 The following Strategies and Policies will be supported by the incentives available within this policy:

- Housing Strategy Statement
- Disabled Adaptations for Council Tenants Policy
- Decant Policy
- Tenancy Strategy
- Mutual Exchange Policy
- Disabled Adaptations Policy

4. Resource implications/Value for Money

4.1 The Council has a Disturbance Budget which will cover this scheme until April 2023. If there are a significant number of moves arranged to access adapted properties resulting in higher payments a Supplementary Estimate for additional funds will be brought to this Committee in January 2023.

5. Legal implications

5.1 Paragraph 2 of Schedule 18 Housing Act 1996 grants a local housing authority the power to make payments to or for the benefit of a tenant or licensee of a dwelling-house within its Housing Revenue Account with a view to assisting or encouraging that person to move to qualifying accommodation. Qualifying accommodation

means a dwelling-house made available to the person concerned as tenant or licensee by any of the following—

- a) the local housing authority making the grant or any other local housing authority;
- b) a private registered provider of social housing; or
- c) a registered social landlord.

6. Equality implications

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Screening found there is no evidence that tenants with any of the nine protected characteristics will be negatively impacted by this policy.
- 6.2 It is therefore considered that the Council will comply with its Public Sector Equality duty when endorsing this Policy and a full impact assessment is not required at this stage.

7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

- 7.1 None identified

8. Consultation

- 8.1 Members are asked to approve a consultation exercise on this draft policy. The consultation will include:
 - A dedicated webpage where residents can share their thoughts on this policy.
 - A questionnaire will be sent to all households who our records indicate are under occupying their home
 - In person or phone conversations will be offered to all those currently registered to downsize.

9. Timetable for Implementation

- 9.1 Following approval an 8-week consultation will be carried out with the draft policy and results of this to be brought back to this meeting in January.

10. Conclusions

- 10.1 Members are asked to approve the Support with Moving Policy for consultation with stakeholders.

(To resolve)

Background Papers

None