

Tenant's Incentive Scheme Policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 There is a shortage of affordable housing, particularly family housing, in South Hams. This situation is clearly evidenced by both district wide and Parish housing needs surveys.
- 1.2 One of the priorities of the Homes Strategy is to meet affordable housing need. To maximise the use of the existing social rented housing stock is a key element within this, as seen in other Council Policy e.g. the allocations policy and banding under the Choice Based Lettings Scheme.
- 1.3 It is recognised that moving house, particularly for the elderly, can be difficult, stressful and costly and that barriers to moving to more appropriate accommodation can often be emotional as well as practical or financial.

2 Key Objectives

- 2.1 To maximise the use of the existing social rented housing stock in the South Hams.
- 2.2 To free up family sized units within the existing social rented housing stock by offering an incentive to move to smaller accommodation. The incentive to include a package of support where appropriate.
- 2.3 To increase the amount of family sized accommodation available.
- 2.4 To find out more about barriers to tenants moving from large accommodation. To find out more about their rehousing needs.

3 Policy

- 3.1 The Council will offer the Tenant's Incentive to households seeking to move within RPs (Registered Providers) housing stock who meet the following criteria:
 - Are an existing Housing Association tenant on an Assured tenancy, living in the South Hams District area and whose Housing Association landlord confirms that the nomination rights for the property being vacated will be given to South Hams District Council.
 - Are in a family sized house – 2 bedrooms or larger
 - Want to move to a property that is at least 1 bedroom less
 - Are registered on Devon Home Choice
 - Where the move will not result in overcrowding
- 3.2 The Scheme will be administered via the Housing Register. Those tenants indicating that they wish to move to a smaller property will be awarded a high housing need or medium housing need band dependent on the number of bedrooms being released, to enable them to apply for suitable properties advertised with Devon Home Choice. It will be made clear that the band will only apply if they bid for appropriate smaller properties.
- 3.3 The Incentive will be set at a standard rate of:

- £1,000 fixed payment, and
- £500 per bedroom released

For example:

- Household A who moves from a 3 bedroom house to a 1 bedroom property will receive £2,000 in total. This is made up of the £1,000 fixed payment and £1,000 for releasing 2 bedrooms.
- Household B who moves from a 2 bedroom house to a 1 bedroom property will receive £1,500 in total. This is made up of the £1,000 fixed payment and £500 for releasing 1 bedroom.

These incentive payments could be used by the household in any way they wish but are intended to help with removal expenses.

- 3.4 Where recognised local pressures on existing housing stock exists discretionary payment may be offered to increase the award total to up to £5000. The decision on whether a tenant is offered this discretionary top up will be agreed by two officers.
- 3.5 The scheme will be administered via Housing Association's internal transfer policies, with tenants indicating that they wish to move to a smaller property being prioritised. All units freed up by the scheme will be allocated to people on Devon Home Choice, in accordance with the usual procedures.
- 3.6 The Scheme will be marketed locally and within RPs to maximise take up from existing tenants who are under occupying. It will be made clear that this is a limited offer until the remainder of the budget is spent.

4 Monitoring

- 4.1 Outcome monitoring will take place at in order to meet the objective of learning about the barriers to moving, especially for the elderly – feedback to be sought following the move by a housing officer.
- 4.2 The scheme is financed through the Housing Investment Programme Budget and will be monitored quarterly.

5 Policy Review

- 5.1 The policy will be reviewed annually.
- 5.2 Feedback will be sought from RPs and the support agencies.

6 Diversity and Equal Opportunities

- 6.1 South Hams District Council is committed to reflecting the full diversity of the community it serves and to promoting equality of opportunity for everyone.
- 6.2 This policy and all associated documentation and leaflets can be made available in large print, Braille, tape format or in any other languages, on request.